

LET SLEEP THE DOGS OF WAR

A NOVEL

A photograph of two dogs standing on their hind legs, facing each other in a warm, orange-lit room. The dog on the left is light brown and speckled, while the dog on the right is black with a white patch on its chest. They appear to be in a playful or affectionate interaction. The background is a warm, orange-toned wall and floor, creating a cozy atmosphere.

Alba Pratalia

LET SLEEP
THE DOGS OF
WAR

or

THE PAPERS WITH THE
GLUE
(THAT STICK TOGETHER)

By Alba Pratalia

Part 1: The Smile Man

Barko was a very happy dog. A good boy. But not *too* good.

His job was clear.

This is my house. This is my yard.

You. Stay. Out.

That's all. No grey areas. No negotiations.

Mailmen, joggers, lost tourists, delivery drivers, old ladies with trolleys, kids on scooters—he didn't discriminate. If your shoe crossed the invisible line of Barko's patrol zone, he would raise hell.

Hackles up, teeth out, voice like thunder.

It worked every time. People fled. Mission accomplished.

The humans in the house would say: "Barko! No! Stop it! He's just delivering packages!"

But Barko knew better. That man *could* have been a threat. And thanks to Barko, no one would ever know.

So, when the man in the sports jacket came, it
should've been the same.

Barko watched him from his post under the lemon
tree.

The man wasn't jogging. Not delivering. Not
passing by.

He was *looking*. Reading numbers on gates.

Barko narrowed his eyes. Something smelled...

Off?

No.

Not off.

Different.

The man stopped.

Looked up.

Locked eyes with Barko.

And *smiled*.

Like really smiled. Not the fake kind humans use
when they're nervous. But a *true*, bursting, full-of-
sunlight kind of smile.

“Well *hello* you,” said the man, in a voice as warm as toast.

Then he did something truly insane.

He *opened his arms*... and **stepped** toward the gate.

Barko should have barked.

He *meant* to bark.

But instead, he tilted his head.

His tail wagged.

Then wagged again.

The man chuckled.

“Oh, you *are* perfect,” he whispered.

Barko was puzzled. Barko was intrigued.

Barko—though ashamed to admit it—was also a little flattered.

He approached the gate slowly. Sniffed.
There was something in the man's scent—
something that smelled like... lightning? Books? A
faraway forest?
He wasn't just a man.

And Barko suddenly realized...

He had never met this man.

But this man?

Knew him.

Part 2: Of Course He Doesn't

The man didn't cross the gate.
He just stood there, arms open, smile wide, waiting
like someone meeting an old friend for the
thousandth time.

Barko, tail still wagging like a helicopter about to lift
off, approached with something close to reverence.
He put both front paws up on the gate, leaned
forward, and locked eyes again.

The man reached through the bars and latched onto his fur. “*Who’s a good boy?*” he asked, in a tone so honest it didn’t feel like a question—it felt like a truth being sung.

Barko melted.

Tail? Bananas.

Ears? Floppy.

Soul? Surrendered.

He pressed his whole head against the man’s chest and let out a low, rumble whine of contentment.

The man knelt, face level with Barko’s now, and Barko did the only thing left to do: **drench him.**

Tongue-out, sloppery, nose-to-eyelash kisses. Chin, cheeks, forehead. Nothing was safe.

The man laughed with full lungs, that kind of laugh that comes from the belly and has no shame. “Oh my God. You’re perfect,” he said between licks.

A voice from the house—dry, amused—called out,
“You can open the gate. He doesn’t bite.”

The man, still crouched and being lovingly assaulted
by canine affection, didn’t even look up.

He just said, joy spilling out of his words:
“Of course he doesn’t.”

Because he knew.
This wasn’t just a good dog.

This was the *best* dog.

And Barko, in turn, thought:
I love this stranger.
I will protect him with my life.
I will commit crimes for him.
I will bark at the moon for him if he asks.
This is my man now.

Part 3: The Man Barko Likes

The man opened the gate and barely made it one step before Barko launched the second wave of affection.

Front paws on his chest, tongue in full offensive, Barko projected kisses with ballistic accuracy. The man, laughing helplessly, tried to maneuver forward while simultaneously holding on to his dignity and what was left of his shirt.

It became a kind of dance—two steps forward, one lick to the face, half a spin, paw to the belly, both laughing like idiots. The man didn't mind. He leaned into it. Who cared if he looked like he was being mugged by a golden-hearted hooligan in fur?

From the doorway, a woman stood, arms akimbo, grinning like she'd seen this a hundred times and still found it delightful.

“*Barko*,” she said with the weariness of maternal authority, “*will you let the gentleman walk like a human being?*”

But Barko had declared war on calmness and dry-clean-only fabric. He wasn't surrendering without a full-blown cuddle conquest.

By the time the man stumbled his way to the porch, his clothes had entered a new dimension—creased, twisted, pawed at, and wildly reconfigured by love. His tie was doing a lazy spiral to the left. His collar looked chewed.

He extended a hand to the woman.

“Excuse my intrusion, ma’am,” he said, voice still catching with joy. “Does a Mr. Louis Barry live here?”

The woman nodded. “He sure does. But he’s *resting* right now.”

From deep inside the house, a croaky, defiant voice rang out:

“No I’m not.”

The woman rolled her eyes. “Well, *then you should be*, Dad. Like the *doc* said. *Multiple* times.”

Another grunt from inside:

“You go napping like a baby. *Bring in the man that Barko likes.*”

The woman turned to the stranger with a smile and a shrug.

“Well. There you go. You’ve been officially summoned by the Council of Stubborn Old Men and their Loyal Dogs. You’d better come in.”

The man straightened his twisted jacket best he could. Barko stood next to him now, finally calm, tail wagging in dignified approval.

And in that moment, the man felt it:

He wasn’t just *allowed* in.

He was *expected*.

Part 4: The Envelope

The man—John—removed his flat cap as he stepped inside. Barko halted at the threshold like a good soldier.

This was sacred human space. Barko knew the rules: **House is home. Yard is kingdom. Indoors is... off duty.**

But he sat by the door, just in case backup was needed.

The woman led John through the hallway. The house was warm in the way that time makes places warm—not just the thermostat, but old wood, lived-in air, books with brittle pages, curtains faded unevenly by years of sun. A home that didn't *try* to impress—it just was.

In the living room sat Louis Barry, an old man who looked carved into the chair he occupied: sturdy, leathery, and partially upholstered by life.

He started to rise when John appeared, but John rushed forward, hand extended.

“Not for me, sir. Don’t bother.”

Louis raised a bristly brow and gripped the offered hand with a grip that still had the old bones of command in it.

“Name’s Louis. No need to ‘sir’ me.”

“John,” the younger man said. “Nice to finally meet you, Barry.”

Louis’s grip lingered just a second too long.

“*Finally?*”

John gave a half-smile—the kind of smile that knows it’s about to sound crazy.

He reached into his jacket and pulled out an envelope. Yellowed. Slightly bent. The corners softened with age.

“I found this in the library of my lab,” John explained. “Tucked inside a book... behind another

book... under another... You know how scientific libraries are.”

Louis gave a dry chuckle. “Buried like fossils, those books.”

John nodded. “This one had your name. And this address.”

He held out the envelope.

Louis stared at it.

He didn’t move to take it.

The woman leaned over slightly. “Dad...?”

But Louis had gone somewhere.

Not physically—his body still sat firm in the armchair—but his eyes had narrowed, focused on some distant past, on a letter he hadn’t seen in decades.

Eventually, with a slowness that made the room hold its breath, he reached out and took it.

The paper crinkled faintly in his fingers.

His hands trembled slightly—not from age, not entirely—but from something else.

Recognition? Fear? Hope?

He looked up at John.

And asked, voice quieter than before:

“Where exactly... did you find this?”

Part 5: The Letter

“Rude of me not introducing myself,” the man said, straightening his back slightly as if formality clung to his bones like old chalk dust. “John Tiburty. I’m a professor of engineering at the university. Campus uptown.”

Louis nodded, the gears of his mind catching up with the present moment.

“I was trying to make the library in my lab a bit more access-friendly for the students—clearer shelves, labels, light.” Tiburty gestured vaguely, the way academics do when they try to explain manual labor. “The lab’s been around since before I was even hired. Many of the books aren’t mine. They’ve belonged to engineers, physicists, dreamers long dead or retired.”

He glanced at the envelope in Louis’s hands.

“And this fell out.”

Louis kept staring at the envelope. It was sealed, barely. Just a lick’s worth of glue holding together decades.

“And you came all the way here just to deliver it?”

Tiburty chuckled, a dry, warm sound that folded the years between them like pages in a forgotten manual.

“I’m afraid I’m old enough to have grown up in a time when people still wrote letters,” he said. “I remember the feeling of seeing your name on an envelope. A real one. Paper and all. Knowing someone, somewhere, sat down with a pen just for you.”

He nodded toward the letter.

“I thought… well, if it was mine, I’d want to know what was inside.”

Louis exhaled softly, the letter now between his palms, as though warming it back to life.

His daughter broke the silence:

“Do you know who sent it, Dad?”

“No,” he said.

Then added, almost to himself:

“Not yet.”

Outside, Barko gave a single bark. Not loud. Not aggressive. Just a note, like punctuation at the end

of a sentence.

Then he sat down again.

John glanced toward the sound, then back at Louis.

“Would you like me to step out while you read it?”

But Louis Barry didn’t answer.

Because he was already carefully, slowly, sliding his finger under the seal.

Part 6: Exit, Softly

John watched as Louis delicately began to break the seal—like peeling time itself open with a fingertip. He saw the old man’s breath steady, his focus narrow to the weight of memory resting in paper.

John stood quietly.

He placed his flat cap back on his head, tugged it with a practiced hand, and offered a small nod—not of farewell, but of understanding.

Then, with a faint smile, he said,
“My friend Barko is waiting for me. If you excuse me.”

Louis didn't look up, but he gave a tiny, grateful grunt.

The daughter walked with John to the door, voice low.

“Thank you for bringing it.”

“Seemed like it had waited long enough,” John replied, already reaching down to scratch Barko behind the ears.

Barko rose instantly, tail resuming its now-familiar rhythm of admiration. The kind reserved for legends and bringers of good news.

The door closed softly behind them.

Inside, the only sound was the slow unfolding of paper.

Outside, the crunch of gravel as John and Barko

walked back to the gate.

Two souls, one human and one dog, both leaving behind something... and carrying something else entirely.

Part 7: One More Minute

John was crouched by the gate, ruffling the fur behind Barko's ears and whispering ridiculous things only dogs are ever meant to hear.

"Tell them I was dignified," he said in mock-serious tone. "Tell them I came, delivered the ancient scroll, and departed into the sunset. Like a gentleman."

Barko licked his chin in reply.

John wiped his face with the back of his hand, grinning.

Then the door creaked open again.

"*Professor?*" the woman called out. "Do you have a minute?"

John turned, still half-kneeling, eyebrows raised in mild surprise.

He looked at Barko.

“Do we have a minute?” he asked him.

Barko’s tail answered first.

It wagged so hard it could have swatted a mosquito at twenty feet. His entire rear wobbled like it was held on with rubber bands.

John laughed.

“Well, I guess that’s a yes.”

He stood, brushed fur off his jacket with the kind of futility only dog lovers know, and followed the woman back toward the house.

Behind them, Barko sat proudly at the gate like a noble doorman. His expression said it all:

This guest is approved.

Part 8: Those Who Know

Inside, the living room was the same, but something had shifted—just slightly. The air felt less like memory and more like present tense.

Louis sat forward in his armchair, letter open in one hand, spectacles slightly lowered on his nose, that sharp old glint in his eyes.

As John stepped in, Louis gave him a grin that was almost mischievous.

“They say,” he began, waving the letter casually, “those who *know*, do. Those who *don’t know*, teach. Is it true, Professor?”

John raised an eyebrow, lips twitching.

“And those who can’t teach, teach *gym*. And those who not even gym are made *dean*. Yes, I’ve heard it. Many times.”

He stepped further in, hands in his pockets, relaxed now.

“I don’t know if it’s *true*, but I do wonder—if those who *know* just *do*, then *who the hell did they learn it from?*”

Louis laughed.

Not politely.

Not with restraint.

He laughed like someone who had just discovered the punchline to a joke he’d been waiting fifty years to hear.

“**Finally!** A sound answer to that old pile of crap. You’re the first, John. Thanks for that.”

He extended the letter, not as if handing it over, but like sharing a puzzle piece with a teammate.

“Here,” he said, voice a touch quieter. “Tell me what *you* make of this.”

John took it gently.

The paper was brittle, but the handwriting still sharp, though slanted with urgency. His eyes

skimmed the lines, his brow slowly folding into furrows of concentration.

He didn't speak yet.

He read.

Louis watched him, and for a moment, the room was quiet again—except for Barko, who had snuck one paw over the threshold and was pretending not to exist.

Part 9: Letters to the Future

John Tiburty squinted at the letter in his hands. His lips moved slightly as he followed the tangled language—somewhere between personal note and technical blueprint.

Schematics made of sentences. Circuits hidden in prose.

He stopped halfway through and shook his head with a slight scoff.

“No sir,” he said, lowering the paper. “That ends up in short circuit. Line three contradicts the power loop. Run that, and the whole thing burns out by stage two. Who wrote this?”

Louis didn’t answer.

Instead, he leaned over and picked up another paper—thinner, worn almost to transparency—and handed it to him.

John read it.

And this time, his eyes lit up.

“Oh,” he said. “*Now* we’re talking.”

He read faster, then slower. Then once more, slower still.

There was something clever in the arrangement, something playful. A machine designed not with brute force, but **elegance**.

You could tell whoever made it *loved* the puzzle. Not just the solution.

“Re-wiring like this...” he muttered, running a finger over the lines, “...you’d get a beautiful resonance. Ingenious. Almost poetic.”

He looked up. “Who sent you this?”

Louis leaned back in his chair. And smiled. The way men smile when they reveal a secret they’ve kept longer than most people keep promises.

“Me,” he said.

Then he added, softly:

“To myself. Over fifty years ago.”

Outside, Barko sneezed once. Like a punctuation mark.

Part 10: The Secrets We Mail Ourselves

Louis gave a small shrug, eyes glinting like he was enjoying a particularly good wine of his own making.

“Today we send ourselves emails, voice notes, calendar reminders... or stash files in a cloud just to keep them safe, right?”

John nodded, curious.

“Well,” Louis went on, tapping the letter, “I did it the only way we had. I mailed it to myself. *Post* mail.”

Tiburty burst out laughing. “Brilliant. Absolutely brilliant. But why? Were you afraid someone might delete the original?”

Louis didn’t miss a beat. “Apply that logic on an **FG4-xzyt/7.**”

John froze.

Then groaned. “Oh, Louis... *not the military.*”

From the side, Louis’s daughter blinked. “What?”

Louis turned his head toward her, smirking like a man who once outran his own shadows.

“It was the ’70s, sweetheart. You had *Watergate plumbers* crawling out of filing cabinets. We didn’t trust *our own dogs* back then.”

Barko: “**Woof woof?**”

(Translation: *What the woof, Louis?*)

Louis tilted his head toward Barko with mock guilt. “No offense. You’d have been an exception.”

Barko gave one noble tail wag. But only one.

Tiburty pinched the bridge of his nose. “Okay. So you had schematics—probably something classified—maybe unregistered—and you mailed them... to your own damn house... to protect them from military clearance?”

Louis grinned. “That’s exactly what I did.”

“But you didn’t. You left the letter in a book.”

“I was doing a lot of acid back then.”

“So the book stayed in the lab that became my lab.”

“Exactly”

“Were you working on the FG4 model back then?”

“No. I was working on scrapping it. And building something else in its bones.”

John looked back at the second letter—the elegant, precise rewiring.

He ran a thumb across the page like he was touching a ghost.

“You were decades ahead,” he whispered.

Louis winked.

“I still am.”

Part 11: Inventions and Legacies

Louis folded his hands over his stomach, the letter resting on his lap like an old friend come home.

“John,” he said, voice shifting from mischief to sincerity, “I’ll be honest with you. That’s why I called you back.”

John tilted his head, attentive.

“Do you think it’s still patentable?”

From across the room, his daughter groaned like someone who had heard this song too many times.

“*Dad, again?* Can’t you just relax already with these patents of yours?”

Louis turned to her gently, not defensive, just... heartfelt.

“Sweetheart, it’s not for *me*. It’s for *you*. And Louis Junior. I’d like to leave him something more than

good stories and an attic full of obsolete prototypes.”

His voice cracked just enough to make the room quieter.

John gave a thoughtful nod, studying the designs again.

“Well,” he said, “to *my* knowledge, it’s inedit. And quite frankly, elegant as hell.”

He tapped the paper with a finger. “I’ll have people at the university run a search—see if it was ever registered or published.”

He hesitated, then added:

“But as for profitability... that’s a whole different animal. It’s a big quantum leap from ‘*this is brilliant*’ to ‘*this will sell*.’ I’d have to get my team to run some models. Maybe a feasibility study. Potential applications. Cost-to-benefit...”

Louis leaned forward. “You’d do that?”

John smiled, folding the papers back into their envelope. “Would you visit me at the university, Louis? Talk to the team yourself?”

Then his grin widened.

“And bring *Barko*. He *must* meet Max. My golden retriever. Bit of a diva. Thinks he’s above barking. I’d love to see Barko fix that.”

Louis chuckled. “Deal.”

Barko, from the door, perked up at his name. His tail thumped twice like a gavel: **Motion passed.**

Part 12: When the Lamb Opened the Seventh Seal

Next Monday at the lab, the air was its usual symphony of chaos.

Tiburty’s engineering students were already well-trained in one survival skill: **coexisting with Max.** Max, the golden retriever with the soul of an emperor and the discipline of a wet noodle, ruled

the lab like it was Versailles.

He barked at 3D printers.

He knocked over whiteboards with calculated elegance.

He once chewed a robotic arm and somehow improved its range of motion.

So when the janitor peeked into the office and said,
“Professor, you’ve got visitors—dog included,”
Tiburty smiled like Christmas came twice.

He jogged out, lab coat billowing behind him like a mad wizard’s cloak.

Outside, under a patch of filtered sun, stood Louis, his daughter, and—front and center, ears alert, tail swishing like a saber—**Barko**.

Tiburty grinned. “Barko, my friend. Permission to enter?”

Barko gave him three rapid sniffs and a ceremonial lick to the wrist. Approval granted.

Only then did Tiburty greet Louis and his daughter properly.

Then, with the theatrical gravitas of a man who knows he's about to unleash hellfire, Tiburty dramatically opened the lab's glass door.

And Barko stepped through.

Across the room, lounging atop a nest of tangled charging cables, Max opened one lazy eye.

They saw each other.

Barko.

Max.

It was not a fight.

It was not a dance.

It was an **apocalyptic convergence.**

What followed *resembled when the Lamb opened the seventh seal.*

And lo, there was barking.

And the students looked, and beheld a great
trembling across the floor as paws thundered, and
cups of coffee fell as if struck by divine wind.

And one student dropped to his knees and
whispered, “So this is how it ends.”

Barko lunged forward with joy and dominance and
mad delight, and Max responded with the flair of an
operatic diva on a trampoline.

Tails lashed.

Tongues flew.

Barks overlapped in counterpoint.

It was unhinged.

It was glorious.

It was, by every metric, a **Tiburty-approved event**.

The professor turned to Louis with sparkling eyes.

“*Now*,” he said, “let’s talk about your invention.”

Part 13: The Dogs of Innovation

While the future of engineering quivered gently beneath their paws, **Max and Barko** established diplomatic relations in the only way true kings do:

- **They peed on a prototype.**
In turns.
Then reversed the order.
Then repeated.
- They sniffed each other's butts over the sacred remains of students’ bags—snacks, notes, spare socks—none of which survived unjudged.
- They both rolled onto their backs at the exact same moment, belly-up, tails thumping in synchronized chaos.
Unfortunately, they did this **on top of a nest of charging cables**, instantly triggering a cascade failure:
—Two laptops, down.

—One satellite antenna, snapped like a breadstick.

—A student screaming “MY THESIS!” in real-time tragedy.

- Max, in an apparent show of affection or an act of war, took a nibble at a student’s shoe.

Barko joined in.

The student was *still inside the shoe*.

In the center of this storm stood **Professor John Tiburty**, smiling like he was seeing art.

Meanwhile, behind a thick safety glass door, in the only space untouched by dog-induced entropy, Tiburty led Louis into the inner sanctum—the research team’s war room.

“Mr. Barry,” Tiburty announced, “allow me to introduce the PhD team: Milo, quantum systems; Arjun, materials; Delia, user interface; and that

twitchy one over there? Mia, coffee machine repair expert, unofficial.”

Louis gave a polite nod to each.

“And,” Tiburty continued, a touch more dramatically, “brace yourself… I now present to you the most formidable presence in the lab…”

The door hissed open like in a spaceship.

And in walked **Mrs. Tiburty**.

A tall, sharp-eyed woman in a flawlessly tailored suit, a clipboard under one arm like a short sword.

“Professor Marianne Tiburty,” John said with reverence, “professor of feasibility, planning, and end-of-dreams when necessary.”

She extended a hand to Louis, deadpan. “I make sure he doesn’t turn the entire university budget into an animatronic jazz band or nuclear espresso machine.”

Louis took her hand. “Sounds like a vital role.”

She raised an eyebrow. “You have *no idea*.”

John cleared his throat. “Louis has brought us something... special.”

Mrs. Tiburty narrowed her eyes. “Oh? Let’s see it. And if the dogs haven’t eaten it.”

Part 14: Acids and Schematics

Louis reached into the old canvas satchel he’d been carrying like a relic and pulled out the bundle of aged papers, bound together with a ribbon that looked suspiciously like it once belonged to a typewriter.

He laid them on the table with care, and with a twinkle in his eye said:

“So, during the ’70s, I did two things. Acid... and this.”

That got the room's attention.

Every PhD student leaned in at once, a semi-circle of eager eyes and caffeine breath. The room shifted from chaos to **pilgrimage**, and even Mrs. Tiburty raised an eyebrow, clipboard tilting like a curious blade.

Tiburty himself clambered onto his high stool with all the grace of a caffeinated lemur.

Then, as if this were part of the ceremony, he grabbed his coffee mug—a chipped piece of ceramic crime—and his ever-present silver flask. He unscrewed it, looked around to ensure no deans were in sight, and **spiked his coffee with some whisky.**

Or rather, **spiked his whisky with a mere insult of coffee.**

He lifted it in salute. “Continue, O Prophet of Acid and Engineering.”

Louis began spreading the pages like blueprints of heresy.

Mrs. Tiburty leaned forward.

“So,” Louis said, pointing at the first diagram, “this was originally part of a countermeasure project for an aircraft system. But I noticed something odd: the dampening algorithm could, with a few adjustments, serve a completely different function—energy distribution via vibration absorption. Self-harmonizing. Self-adapting.”

Delia blinked. “Wait... you were making a machine that *feeds* on chaos?”

Louis shrugged. “I was just trying to stop planes from shaking apart.”

Milo whispered, “Dude... that’s an entropy harvester.”

Mrs. Tiburty’s pen clicked out. “And you’re sure you didn’t hallucinate this?”

“Oh, probably did,” Louis smiled. “But it works.”

The room went silent.

Max and Barko—now tangled in a blanket and mutually napping—shifted gently as if they too sensed something had begun.

Part 15: Caffè Corretto and Budgetary Mutiny

Tiburty leaned back on his stool, mug in hand, eyes gleaming with the thrill of heresy and invention.

“Alright, listen up, geniuses. I want you to **build it**. Most of the components we already have. What we don’t...”

He turned dramatically toward the table.

“...you buy using *Mia’s* budget.”

A chorus of delighted gasps from the PhD horde.

Mia froze.

“*Professor!*” she protested, scandalized.

Tiburty turned to her with faux innocence.

“Sweetheart, you have a **two-million-dollar PhD grant** for studying *four-dimensional torque on spaceship bolts*. If you can name a single physical object that you *actually* need for that thesis—”

Mia crossed her arms. “Okay, fair enough.”

Then raised a finger.

“But I want an espresso machine.”

Tiburty’s eyes twinkled. “I *built* you one.”

Mia pointed toward the smoking monstrosity in the corner. “Professor, that thing automatically spikes coffee with Italian *grappa*.”

Tiburty beamed. “Yes. It’s called *caffè corretto*. *Corrected coffee*. It means coffee *without* grappa is **wrong**.”

Mia exhaled through her teeth. “Ms. Tiburty...”

Mrs. Tiburty did not blink. She simply said, “John, you are buying this girl a *non-alcoholic* coffee machine.”

Tiburty groaned as if someone had asked him to solder a toaster with a philosophy degree.
“Oh, *you pests.*”

The students cheered.

Louis chuckled.

Barko lifted his head sleepily and gave one soft
“woof,” as if voting in favor of Mia’s espresso rights.

Outside, the storm clouds of invention gathered.

And somewhere deep in the engineering stacks...
entropy was about to be harvested.

Part 16: Of Genders and Gears

The construction began the way all noble
engineering projects begin:

—With hope, caffeine, and an ungodly number of zip ties.

The lab filled with the sweet sounds of prototype resurrection: buzzing drills, clanking tools, students shouting over classical music and barking dogs. Max had claimed the cable nest again. Barko now monitored the entrance like a hairy maître d’.

Louis hovered near Tiburty as they examined a particularly tricky junction of coil arrays and feedback regulators.

He squinted at the diagram, scratched the side of his head, then asked, loud enough for half the lab to hear:

“Can I still say *male-female connections*? Or are connections *non-binary* these days?”

There was a pause.

Not silence—no, the lab was never silent.

But a **pause**.

The kind of pause where time politely clears its throat and waits to see if you'll dig yourself deeper.

Tiburty stood still.

Then **loudly** cleared his own throat.

Once.

Twice.

Three times.

Then, as if summoning courage from the ancient gods of engineering, he unscrewed his flask, took a long sip, and said nothing.

Across the room, **Mrs. Tiburty** turned. Her heels clicked a precise rhythm as she walked toward the door—each step more passive-aggressive than the last.

She did not speak.

She did not need to.

Her **ti-tap-ti-tap** exit communicated all that had to be said:

You're on your own now, John.

John exhaled.

“Okay, terminology lesson later. Louis, let’s just call it *plug A* and *socket B*, alright?”

Louis shrugged. “Fair enough. Just don’t let the plugs unionize.”

Max barked. Barko sighed.

The prototype began to take shape—mysterious, promising, and possibly illegal in three jurisdictions.

Part 17: Boom, Burn, and Scotch

Tiburty was alone in his office, enjoying the rare silence and nursing what might generously be called *coffee* and more accurately called *mood stabilizer*, when it happened.

A **flash**—blinding even through the office blinds.

A **BOOM**—loud enough to rattle the ceiling tiles.

Then a serene **plume of smoke**, rising like incense from the engineering altar of chaos.

Tiburty did not panic.

He did not rush.

He **strolled**, with the weary grace of a man who had seen this happen too many times to feel anything but mild curiosity.

He found the lab in its natural state: post-apocalyptic.

Students were coughing in the haze. A whiteboard was upside down. A mechanical arm lay twitching on the floor. And **Louis Barry** stood dead center—his **eyebrows singed into wild, smoky apostrophes**.

“Some confusion,” Louis said, brushing ash off his shoulder, “between **plug and socket identity**.”

Tiburty sighed. “As always.”

He reached into his coat pocket, pulled out his ever-faithful flask, shook it thoughtfully, and then nodded toward the exit.

“Fancy a drink?”

Louis looked around at the still-smoking chaos. “As far from here as humanly possible, please.”

“Figured.”

They turned to leave. Behind them, Max barked once. Barko howled in solidarity.

Louis added, “*Double*. And **no gender identity**, please.”

Tiburty didn’t skip a beat. “It’s scotch. And it has a mean attitude.”

Max: “Woof!” (Translation: *It does!*)

Barko: “Awoo.” (Translation: *Can we try some?*)

Tiburty held up a finger. “Only if you bring ID and don’t drool in the glass.”

And with that, the two old men—one slightly on fire, the other perfectly resigned—walked into the sunset-smelling hallway, leaving behind smoke, sparks, and two emotionally complex dogs.

Part 18: Ghosts in the Smoke

Just as Tiburty and Louis reached the threshold of blessed escape, a voice cut through the haze like a freshman’s first regret.

“Ehm... professor? You might want to see this.”

Tiburty stopped mid-step. His sigh carried the weight of all things once promised and now delayed.

He looked at Louis. “Allow me a minute.”

Louis nodded, already patting down what was left of his eyebrows.

Tiburty turned back toward the lab, stepping through the smoky veil like a prophet returning to his people.

And there, amid the fizzing sparks and chemical perfume of a minor technological calamity, **three figures** emerged, blinking, coughing, and waving the air:

—A **man** in a soot-covered overcoat.

—A **dog**, noble, familiar, too large for most spaces.

—And a **cat**, perched on the dog's back with the haughty disdain of someone pulled into an explosion before their nap was finished.

Tiburty froze. Squinted.

“...Diderot?”

The man turned, eyes squinting through fogged glasses.

“...Tiburty?”

There was a beat.

Then recognition exploded brighter than any faulty socket ever had.

They **rushed** to each other.

And **hugged** like exiles from the same mad kingdom.

“Genius of the Restoration!” Tiburty cried, nearly lifting Diderot off the ground.

“Aid our resuscitation!” Diderot coughed, flinging soot from his sleeves.

Barko barked in jubilation.

Max looked deeply offended by the presence of another dog with literary flair.

The students stood in stunned silence.

Louis reappeared in the doorway, flask in hand, stared at the scene, and muttered, “...What the hell did we just build?”

Tiburty turned to the stunned lab.

“I want *nobody* to touch *anything*,” he ordered, eyes gleaming. “Not until I find out *exactly* which wires were crossed and *which dimension* we just peeled open.”

Diderot turned to the class, brushing cat hair from his collar.

“Is this a university?”

A stunned Mia nodded.

He clapped once. “Good. Someone find me coffee. And a new timeline.”

Part 19: Friends, But Not *That* Kind

As the humans attempted to make sense of what had just collapsed through time, space, and questionable wiring, the real diplomacy was already underway.

Borges, Diderot’s loyal and existentially large dog, tilted his head at Max and Barko.

“Awoo?” (Translation: *Friends?*)

Max and Barko, still half-charged with static electricity and revolutionary fervor, performed the ancient ritual:

—**The sniff.**

—**The counter-sniff.**

—**The mutually respectful circle around.**

—**The tail wag verdict.**

“Woof woof!”

(Translation: *Confirmed. Friends.*)

The three of them touched noses like furry ambassadors ratifying a treaty.

And then from the shelf, with the disdain of a tired librarian in a room full of beatboxing children, came the velvet-toned, razor-edged voice of **Pascal**, Diderot’s cat.

The smoke parted like curtains for his dramatic announcement:

“Oh no. I’m out.”

He leapt gracefully to a desk.

“I’m not doing a *three dogs* case. That’s how civilizations fall. Or at the very least, furniture.”

He began grooming himself violently, clearly disassociating.

Max offered a wag.

Barko tilted his head.

Borges, unfazed, sat down heavily, creating a mild tremor.

Pascal flicked his tail. “Don’t even try the group howl. I’m allergic to collective emotion.”

Louis turned to Tiburty. “Should I ask?”

Tiburty took a long, reverent sip of scotch and whispered:

“Don’t. It’ll only make it weirder.”

Part 20: The Oooh of Doom

While Max, Barko, and Borges performed synchronized friendship rituals and Pascal plotted a constitutional monarchy for cats, inside the lab **another spark** was catching fire—and not the electrical kind.

Álvaro Diderot—philosopher, troublemaker, and rogue metaphysicist reconstituted from entropy and whiskey fumes—suddenly *saw* her.

Mia.

Still swatting at fireflies from a minor circuit flash, her hair gently crackling with the romantic glow of static tragedy.

Álvaro's head tilted. His eyes glistened with theatrical revelation.

“Oooh.”

It wasn't just a sound.

It was a *summons*.

A *premonition*.

A *French overture* in a single syllable.

Tiburty's soul screamed in silence.

He turned like a man recognizing thunderclouds by
the taste in the air.

"Oh no, Diderot. You don't."

But it was **already too late**.

Álvaro had **entered full gallant mode**.

In one smooth motion, he bowed low with old-world
flair and took Mia's soot-smeared, slightly singed
hand in his own.

He kissed it softly, as if greeting a duchess on the
deck of a sinking ship.

“My dear,” he said in a voice that made at least one laptop reboot itself out of respect, “you are the only flame here worth being burned by.”

Mia giggled.

Actually giggled.

Tiburty dropped his flask.

A student fainted.

Pascal rolled his eyes so hard it disrupted the local magnetic field.

Max barked a laugh. Barko barked in alarm. Borges simply sighed, like he'd seen this opera before.

Tiburty facepalmed, hard. “This is *exactly* how the last metaphysical incident started.”

Louis whispered to him, “Do we need to separate them?”

“No,” Tiburty muttered. “Not yet. But if he pulls out a sonnet, I’m cutting power to the building.”

Part 21: The Return of the King

And then...

piano.

Out of *nowhere*.

No keys. No pianist. No *source*.

Just *sound*—rich, echoing, heartbreakingly familiar.

Tiburty froze. Eyes darting to the ceiling as if the sprinkler system might join in with brass.

He whispered like a man who’d seen war:

“Oh no. Not again.”

Álvaro Diderot—slightly smoking, freshly revived, and possessed by the spirit of ten poets and one ghost of Graceland—turned to Mia.

He took her hand once more, placed a palm gently against his heart, and began to sing.

Soft at first. Intimate. Vulnerable.

Then louder. Stronger. Velvet-drenched baritone
building like divine nostalgia.

**“Maybe I didn’t love you
Quite as often as I could have...”**

Mia blinked. Her cheeks flushed like sunrise
meeting ozone.

**“Maybe I didn’t treat you
Quite as good as I should have...”**

In the corner, the dogs froze.

Borges: *“Woof?”* (Elvis?)

Barko: *“Woof!”* (Elvis!)

Max: *“Wooo-oof!”* (The **King!**)

And then the chorus.

**“You were always on my mind...
You were always on my mind...”**

Mia was melting.

Students were swaying.

One of them lit a lighter, forgot where they were,
and set their sleeve on fire.

Louis leaned sideways toward Tiburty, who looked
like he'd just bitten through a chalkboard.

“Is this... normal?”

Tiburty didn't look at him. Just nodded grimly.

“With Diderot, it is...”

Pascal leapt up onto a windowsill, looked out into
the void, and muttered:

*“If this turns into a full Vegas set, I'm defecting to
quantum physics.”*

Part 22: Schematics and Seduction

Álvaro Diderot, still trailing invisible piano notes and a trail of poetic smoke, turned to Tiburty and the room at large.

With Mia's hand in his, he gave a small, gallant nod.

"If you will excuse us," he said, already walking backward toward the **components closet**.

The students gasped.

Tiburty didn't.

Tiburty threw his arms to the heavens like a preacher too tired for repentance.

"Sure, sure! Be fruitful and multiply!"

Then he collapsed onto his high stool, the very picture of academic despair, and upended his flask.

It made a **hollow clink**.

Empty.

Of course it was.

Louis, watching the door click shut behind Mia and Diderot, leaned in, confused but trying not to sound old.

“I... fail to grasp some context here.”

Tiburty nodded slowly, then spoke with the eloquence of a burnt-out oracle.

“Louis, my friend, apparently your elegant little feedback loop? Your cute little dampening system?”
He tapped the blueprint, still smoking slightly at the edges.

“You designed an *intra-dimensional portal* and I—*genius emeritus of three departments*—failed to read it through your goddamn 1970s schematics.”

He held up the flask, examined its emptiness as though it might somehow reflect his soul, and toasted the void anyway.

“So cheers... cheers to my inability to read blueprints written during Nixon’s presidency.”

He drank air like it was regret.

Max whined sympathetically.

Barko gave a short, affirming bark, like *“Yeah. That tracks.”*

Borges sat regally, watching the closet door with the cool understanding of a creature who had been dragged through timelines before.

From inside the closet came the distant sound of giggling, the rustle of circuit boxes, and a clatter that may or may not have involved magnets and someone's elbow.

Pascal rolled his eyes and muttered:

“Great. We’ve now weaponized poetry and lust. The multiverse is doomed.”

Part 23: Closet Diplomacy and Domestic Disturbances

The closet door creaked open, releasing a waft of displaced wires, spark plug aroma, and something disturbingly close to pheromonal poetry.

Out walked **Álvaro Diderot**, looking smugly disheveled and historically aroused.

Beside him, **Mia**, cheeks flushed, eyes dazed, hair slightly rearranged into a style known as *post-romantic-electrostatic*.

They still held hands.

As the world reeled from this development, **Mrs. Tiburty** peeked in through the hallway door, clipboard in one hand, espresso in the other, eyes scanning like a drone preparing for a strike.

“Is the woke gender storm over?” she asked dryly, taking in the disheveled lab, the dogs passed out from overstimulation, and a minor smoldering wire in the corner.

Then she saw him.

Álvaro.

She froze like a deer recognizing a speeding piano.

Her mouth dropped, then closed into a line sharp enough to correct a thesis.

“Oh no. Not Diderot. I’m not doing this again.”

SLAM.

Door closed.

Silence.

Álvaro, unbothered, turned to Tiburty with a lazy grin.

“Ah, the missus. How is she, Tiburty?”

Tiburty stared at him like a man watching a meteor approach with his name engraved on it.

“Very well,” he replied flatly. “*Apparently until she saw you.*”

Álvaro shrugged, gave a wistful sigh, and muttered:

“Eh. Women.”

Then realized, mid-shrug, that he was still very much **holding Mia’s hand**.

He straightened.

“Not you, my dear. *Not you.*”

Mia giggled and fanned herself with a folded schematic.

Tiburty muttered into his empty flask:

“Jesus. We’ve breached interdimensional space *and* office romance protocol in under an hour. That must be a record.”

Louis, still trying to understand modern time, modern ethics, and modern thermostats, just nodded politely. “Should I go back to acid, or does this get more linear?”

Pascal, from his perch: “Oh no, Louis. *This is the linear part.*”

Part 24: Liquid Sanity and Quadrimensional Discipline

Tiburty, still perched on his high stool like a man surveying the battlefield after the cavalry slept with the infantry, sighed.

He opened the sacred **bottom drawer**.

Inside, nestled between spare schematics, an old soldering gun, and a broken compass that always pointed to chaos, lay a **fresh bottle of scotch**.

With the solemnity of a priest beginning last rites, Tiburty popped the cork and took a **long, unapologetic swig** straight from the neck.

He exhaled.

Then turned, bottle in hand, and extended it to **Álvaro Diderot** like a man offering an antidote to a person who's already licked the poison.

“Stuff your face with this and quit bothering my students.”

Álvaro accepted it with a wink. “I only bother the brilliant ones.”

Tiburty turned to **Mia**, who was still blushing in sonata major.

“Sweetheart,” he said with mock affection and real exhaustion, “if you’re done friskying philosophy professors through wormholes, those **quadrimensional torques** are not going to calculate themselves.”

Mia saluted with the schematic she’d been using as a fan and scampered off, attempting dignity despite the lipstick mark suspiciously near her temple.

Tiburty snatched the bottle back from Diderot, took another hit, then handed it to **Louis**, who had remained heroically upright throughout it all.

“You’ll need it.”

Louis took it like a field medic being handed the last morphine shot.

He looked around the lab:

—Three dogs asleep in a tangle of wires.

—A philosophical interloper crooning country ballads to quantum theorists.

—A student trying to explain to a grant committee how interdimensional leakage doesn't *technically* violate ethics guidelines.

—And Pascal, the cat, drawing a pentagram in dust just to freak people out.

Louis drank deeply.

“Now *this* feels like the '70s.”

Part 25: We All Blame the '70s

Diderot, now settled into the lab like he owned half its mass and all its attention span, swirled the scotch in his hand like it might whisper answers.

He turned to Tiburty with that signature arched-brow smirk of his, the one that meant philosophy was about to be weaponized.

“So, Tiburty… what brings me here?”

Tiburty didn’t speak.

He simply lifted a tired arm and pointed a dramatic finger across the room.

To Louis.

Diderot followed the line of sight.

He straightened, placed a hand over his chest like a vaudeville gentleman, and offered a nod.

“Álvaro Diderot. A pleasure.”

Louis blinked, clutching the scotch bottle like a life vest.

“…Louis Barry. Likewise.”

Diderot smiled wider. “So, Mr. Barry—what brings me *here*?”

Louis frowned. “Well… actually I was going to ask *you* the same.”

Diderot, not missing a beat:

“My good man, *you* transported me here.”

Louis raised both hands. “*Not on purpose*, believe me.”

Diderot turned to Tiburty, expression curious and accusatory all at once.

Tiburty sighed. “It’s true. We were just trying to wire up a stabilizer contraption from one of his old 1970s schematics. Military anti-vibration system.”

Diderot lit up like a man remembering a favorite hallucination.

“Ohhh, the ’70s… *good* drugs.”

Louis raised his bottle in a toast. “The *best*.”

Diderot snapped his fingers. “I get it now.”

Tiburty nodded, eyes closed in defeat.

“Yep.”

They all stood there for a moment, basking in the warm radioactive glow of mutual confusion made coherent by shared nostalgia and strong scotch.

Pascal, from atop a server:

“I don’t get it.”

Max: “*Woof*.” (You’re not supposed to.)

Part 26: The Brotherhood of the Burnt Circuit

With smoke still wafting from the lab’s last heroic failure and the air thick with ozone, scotch, and unresolved metaphysics, **Álvaro Diderot** did what any self-respecting, possibly interdimensional philosopher would do:

He slung one arm through **Louis Barry's**, the other through **Tiburty's**, and declared with joy that echoed across timelines:

“Shall we finish this bottle somewhere quieter?”

Tiburty, never one to turn down a dramatic exit or a free drink, placed a hand over Diderot's and gave a theatrical bow mid-stride.

“Lead the way, my dear.”

Diderot grinned. **“Oh yeah!”**

Louis, arm looped with men who clearly hadn't aged internally past 27, chuckled as they marched like drunken revolutionaries toward the nearest exit.

“Just like Woodstock.”

They walked off into the hallway—two professors and a half-retired inventor, united by fire, failure, and fermented logic. Barko trotted loyally behind them. Max hesitated, then followed. Borges

lumbered. Pascal dramatically chose *not* to follow and turned instead to judge everyone from a high shelf.

As they disappeared around the corner, a stunned first-year student peeked into the lab.

“...Was that the tenure committee?”

A nearby grad student shrugged. “Either that or a Rolling Stones reunion. Hard to tell anymore.”

Part 27: The Sacred Smoke of Denial

Roughly an hour after the triumvirate of chaos—Tiburty, Diderot, and Louis—disappeared into the philosophical womb of Tiburty’s office, a **peculiar smoke** began to seep out from beneath the door.

It carried a fragrance not found in any known laboratory chemical catalog, unless someone had recently synthesized *Enlightenment-era peyote*.

Professor Thompson, the ever-stern high priest of **Analytical Mechanics**, approached with suspicion and tenure-fueled authority. He sniffed once. Then twice. His nose twitched like a man recalling memories from a dormitory in 1974.

He knocked.

From inside came Tiburty's unmistakable voice, muffled and serene:

"Duuuuude... are you the pizzas?"

Thompson blinked.

He cautiously opened the door.

Inside, the scene resembled a cross between a failed Phish concert and the day René Descartes gave up.

- **Tiburty** sat at his desk, shoes off, socks mismatched, feet up, and a half-full glass of something golden in hand.

- **Álvaro Diderot** was seated cross-legged on the floor, gently exhaling from a *calumet* the length of a clarinet, looking like a 17th-century sage who had just invented jazz.
- **Louis Barry**, flushed and gleeful, was scribbling *equations* on the back of a blueprint—equations which, upon closer inspection, appeared to describe both **magnetic resonance** and **very creative sex acts**. He was giggling with the unfiltered joy of a child drawing boobs on his calculus homework.

Thompson stepped in like a man inspecting a crime scene at an ashram.

“John. Are you *smoking inside now?*”

Tiburty raised one hand and gave the laziest wave in academic history.

“Welding fumes, dude. Just welding fumes.”

Thompson pointed.

“That is a *calumet*.”

Tiburty nodded solemnly.

“No no. It’s a welder.”

From the floor, Diderot added helpfully:

“Bzzz bzzz… *weld weld!*”

Louis giggled louder and added a flourish to an integral that now unmistakably resembled a very happy pair of buttocks.

Professor Thompson stared for a long moment.

Then very slowly, **closed the door** again.

He stood in the hallway, blinking into the void, and whispered to himself:

“I never saw any of that.”

Then walked away.

Behind the door, Barko woofed. Max woofed.
Borges let out a long sigh of peace. Pascal, from the
bookshelf, lit a stick of incense and began
meditating ironically.

Part 28: A Most Inconvenient Entrance

Just as the sacred peace of denial, intoxication, and
pseudophilosophical welding settled over Tiburty's
office...

A deafening, elongated

FF——

Everyone stopped.

Eyes met.

Then, slowly, as one, **they all looked up.**

CRASH.

The ceiling **exploded** in a spray of dust, debris, and
tiles, as the lab was dramatically **interrupted from**
above by the most unwelcome form of delivery:

A full human body
fell
straight
through.

SPLAT.

It hit the floor with a **moist, irreversible thunk**,
followed by a grotesque **splatter** that Jackson
Pollock himself might have considered “*a bit much.*”

Bits of viscera hit Diderot’s calumet.
Louis blinked. “Is that a pancreas on my
schematic?”
Tiburty didn’t flinch.

He slowly turned to the mess on the floor and, with
infinite calm, muttered:

“The door, dude. *Knock first.*”

There was a beat of silence. Then:

Pascal, perched and untouched, let out a low, utterly unimpressed:

“Meow.”

(Translation: *Well. That escalated poorly.*)

Max whined.

Barko tilted his head.

Borges gently pawed a piece of spleen and looked mildly concerned.

Louis sipped from the bottle. “Is this... metaphysical oversight?”

Tiburty squinted at the puddle of former bureaucrat. “If it was, oversight was the right word.”

Diderot exhaled deeply through his nostrils. “You think he’s alright?”

Pascal: “He’s in more pieces than the Copenhagen interpretation.”

Part 29: The Vatican Job Revisited

As the freshly deceased metaphysical auditor slowly seeped into the floor, mingling uncomfortably with someone's half-eaten sandwich and an old resistor, **Álvaro Diderot** stared into the middle distance.

A thoughtful squint. A twitch at the corner of his mouth.

Then he said:

"I have a déjà vu sensation."

From beside the splattered corpse, **Borges** let out a mellow, resigned woof.

"That's because we *already lived this*, dude."

Diderot snapped his fingers. "*Right!* I remember now... there was a *topless dwarf lady*..."

Pascal, without even raising his head:

"And *Fonzie*. And the *Cool*."

Diderot pointed dramatically at the cat. "Yes! Exactly! *And the Vatican*."

Tiburty groaned and rubbed his temples. “Context, Diderot. *Context.*”

So Diderot stood, cleared his throat, and launched into it like a man retelling a war story no one ever asked for but everyone would listen to anyway.

“So. There was a man. A *dead man*. With a knife in his back. I found him in my house. Normal Tuesday.”

He began pacing around the body on the floor, arms gesturing like jazz hands in theological combat.

“Then more bodies started *falling*. First men, then objects. Then, at some point, I—I mean, *we*—got sucked into a rift caused by metaphysical instabilities in Vatican-grade theology, ductwork, and possibly unsanctioned wine.”

Tiburty, muttering: “I remember. I read the reports. There *were no survivors*. Just a footprint in the shape of a heresy.”

Diderot, grinning now: “And where did we land? **1950s America**. Greased hair. Sock hops. Existential nausea. And *Fonzie*.”

Louis: “As in... *The Fonz*?”

Borges: “*Ayyyyyy*.”

Diderot: “Yes. The living incarnation of *Cool*. A metaphysical force. An eternal constant. The inverse of Vatican rigidity. He taught us about the Cool. We weaponized it. And unleashed it on the world’s greatest bastion of uncool...”

He paused for effect.

“**The Vatican.**”

Pascal, sighing: “We reverse-vaporized it through a process known as *Metaphysical Annihilation by*

Hypercool Infusion. It took five Elvises and a quantum sax solo.”

Tiburty: “All that because someone messed with the Vatican’s HVAC system.”

Diderot, proud: “Correction. We introduced *Anti-Cool* to the Vatican’s air conditioning. The Pope burst into glitter and a single suppressed jazz chord.”

The lab fell silent again.

The dead bureaucrat twitched slightly. Or maybe it was just gravity doing its thing.

Louis: “And you wrote this in your first book?”

Tiburty: “Published it under Philosophy, shelved it under *Fiction*. Students still argue if it’s a metaphor or an interdimensional confession.”

Pascal: “I argued it was just an excuse to meet Sinatra.”

Diderot: “And I did. He kissed me on the forehead.
I still smell of cologne and defiance.”

The metaphysical oversight committee was late.

The lab was glowing with madness.

And somewhere, the Vatican still vibrated faintly
with unresolved trauma.

Part 30: The Bleached Bedsheet Theory of Everything

The body on the floor had begun to… **settle**, as
bodies do when bureaucracy fails them. But
Tiburty’s attention was now fixed squarely on
something much more alarming than death:

Repetition.

He pointed a stern finger at Álvaro Diderot, whose
legs were now folded lotus-style, swirling what may
have been the last of the scotch in the bottle, eyes
full of stars, jazz, and mildly radioactive memory.

“Diderot… the *falling bodies*. You’ve gone through this before?”

Diderot nodded sagely, as if remembering the rules of a game only he ever played.

“Oh yes. *Many* bodies. One landed in my living room. Another crashed through a library. *And a safe.*”

Tiburty blinked.

“…A *safe*?”

Diderot tilted his head. “*See?* You don’t care about the *bodies* either.”

Tiburty raised a finger, opened his mouth to retort, then conceded: “Okay, fair. But focus. In general, **bodies don’t fall**. They *stay put*. You don’t just get airdropped cadavers. Where do they come from? Planes? Shot by cannons? A tragic misunderstanding with a pole vaulting team?”

Diderot, totally unbothered:

“Oh no, nothing of the sort. They fall from *rips* in the space-time continuum.”

Tiburty slowly turned to Louis.

Deadpan. Calm.

“See what your contraption did?”

Louis looked vaguely insulted. “I just wanted to dampen vibrations. I didn’t ask for an existential skyfall.”

Diderot waved a hand. “No no, don’t be silly. *Your* device simply **transported** us. Harmless displacement. What *rips* the continuum… is a much **stronger** force. Something is trying to **stretch** it. Pull it. Open it like spandex two sizes too small.”

Tiburty narrowed his eyes.

“Diderot… do you even know what the space-time continuum *is*?”

Diderot raised one philosophical eyebrow, stroked an invisible beard, and said:

“It’s like... a big sheet. That’s been through *too much bleach.*”

There was a pause.

Then, in perfect stereo:

Tiburty and Louis: *facepalm.*

From the shelf above, **Pascal** let out a slow, long yawn and declared:

“The end of physics will not be fire or ice. It will be *metaphors.*”

Part 31: The Avignon Incident and the Summoning of Mia

Borges, who had been quietly chewing on a melted power strip, lifted his regal head and addressed the room:

“Well, the Church is out of the usual suspects.
We’ve already annihilated *two* Vatican’s.”

Louis choked on a sip of scotch.

“*Two* Vatican’s?”

Pascal, without even blinking:

“Oh yes. The second one was *much* funnier. It
involved jazz, machine guns, an Italian anarchist,
and Edith Piaf.”

Tiburty and Louis **locked eyes**, an unspoken horror
dawning in stereo.

Tiburty whispered:

“You mean the *Avignon massacre*? That was *you*?”

Diderot, stretching like a cat who just remembered
he blew up a pontiff, casually replied:

“The three of us. Borges, Pascal, and I. Plus a little
help.”

Tiburty folded his arms. “Diderot... *you should call me* when you’re having that kind of fun.”

Diderot, apologetic but not really:

“I *know*, Tiburty. I’m sorry. It was on *short notice*.”

Tiburty gave him the international look of *we could’ve had so much fun together*.

Then nodded once. “Okay. But you *owe*.”

Diderot bowed his head solemnly. “Fair enough.
Raincheck noted.”

Louis, now frantically scribbling and underlining the phrase “*Avignon = Diderot?*” in his notebook, interjected:

“So... guys... the *quadrimensional rips?*”

Tiburty sighed, pulled out his phone, and dialed the lab.

“Give me Mia,” he said.

Pause.

“Yes. Hello, sweetheart. Get your four-dimensional ass up here to the office.”

He glanced at the broken ceiling and the corpse melting on the floor.

“And knock first.”

He hung up and looked around.

Pascal was licking his paw like nothing mattered.

Max had started chewing the dead auditor’s shoes.

Barko wagged his tail once, solemnly.

Borges was humming *La Vie en Rose* through his nose.

Diderot gave Tiburty a look of excitement and mild concern.

Louis whispered, “We’re going to need a new grant.”

Tiburty muttered, “We’re going to need a *new Vatican*.”

Part 32: Mia Arrives in Style

Knock knock.

All heads turned toward the door like synchronized philosophers.

Tiburty raised an eyebrow and intoned, deadpan:

“Who’s there?”

A voice through the wood:

“Mia.”

All three—**Tiburty**, **Diderot**, and **Louis**—replied in chorus like bored teenagers in a knock-knock joke contest:

“Mia *who?*”

The voice, cheerful and unbothered:

“*Miass up here* as you asked, prof.”

Tiburty leaned back, smiling faintly. “It’s her.”

Then louder:

“Come in, sweetheart. Ignore the corpse.”

There was a beat.

Mia opened the door.

Took one step in.

“The corpse?” she asked, suspicious.

Then she saw it.

The body, mid-decomposition, flattened across a field of scorched tiles and post-modern regret.

Mia tilted her head, appraising.

She’d seen worse in first-year robotics.

“Oh. *This* corpse. Nice *Pollock*.”

Diderot clapped with delight.

“*She stays.*”

Pascal, from the windowsill: “Finally, someone with taste.”

Tiburty gestured for Mia to come closer.

“We need your brain, your dimensional instincts, and maybe your ability to pretend any of this is normal.”

Mia snapped on her lab gloves like she was about to give the universe a gynecological exam.

“Alright, boys. Let’s see what the hell just ripped open in spacetime.”

Part 33: Boundaries and Warnings

Tiburty stood up, adjusted his lab coat like a general about to brief a battalion, and pointed a firm, declarative finger **first at Álvaro, then at Mia.**

“You two don’t get frisky during work time.”

Mia raised an eyebrow. Álvaro opened his mouth to protest, but Tiburty cut them off with the most ancient and terrifying gesture known to teachers, parents, and slightly unhinged generals across all dimensions:

He pointed **two fingers at his own eyes...**

Then at **them.**

Back to **his eyes.**

Then **them again.**

The message was clear:

I’m watching you. With all the dimensions.

Mia, stifling a smirk, **crossed her heart.**

Álvaro followed, with exaggerated solemnity, as if taking an oath before the High Council of Lustful Academics.

“Scout’s honor,” he added.

Pascal rolled his eyes. “They were never in scouts. Álvaro once got lost in a coat closet.”

Tiburty sat back down and muttered, “God help us if they figure out how to weaponize flirting in four dimensions.”

Louis, still holding the scotch bottle like it was an emotional support ferret, whispered, “Would that make it *quantum dating*?”

Borges woofed once, deeply and wisely.

Max farted.

And with the terms laid down, the team turned to Mia.

Work time had begun.

And spacetime was waiting.

Part 34: The Scientific Method of Despair

Mia, gloves on, tablet ready, looking professional enough to shame half the university, stood over the mess of fried wires, philosophical residue, and scattered blueprints. She looked around at the panel of chaos-bearded men, the semi-digested corpse, and the ambient scent of jazz smoke and despair.

“So,” she asked brightly, “**what do the readings say?**”

Tiburty, feet now firmly on the floor, looked at her with the soft weariness of a man who once tried to measure entropy with a fork.

“**What readings, sweetheart?**”

Mia frowned. “I mean, the *data*—the measurements, the logs, the sensor output…”

Tiburty shook his head. Slowly. Tragically. Universally.

Mia blinked. “…Problem statement?”

Tiburty stood, arms wide like a washed-up preacher before a burned pulpit.

“Nothing. Nada. *Rien de rien. Niente. Nichts.* ナッシング. 零.”

He dropped his arms.

“This is a *real life problem*, sweetheart. And in real life, life gives you *fuck all*.”

Diderot clapped. “Spoken like Camus at a faculty mixer.”

Pascal muttered, “Or a hungover Sartre trying to find socks.”

Louis whispered, “This explains why I always failed peer review.”

Mia crossed her arms. “So let me get this straight: a man fell through the roof, possibly from another dimension, after we activated a system no one fully understands… *and no one recorded anything?*”

Tiburty: “Of course we did! We recorded a *vibe*.”

Pascal: “And a *mess*.”

Max: “*Woof*.” (And a *corpse*.)

Mia sighed. Deeply. Then pulled her hair into a bun like she was going to rebuild the universe from scratch.

“Fine. No data? I’ll reverse-engineer the rip from the carbon scoring, magnetic displacement, and emotional trauma.”

Tiburty raised his glass. “Attagirl.”

Part 35: Craters, Corpses, and Counterculture

Two hours later, the **holy trinity of Tiburty, Diderot, and Louis** were once again as **baked as artisanal biscuits**, lounging in a state of advanced philosophical sedation. The **providential hole** in the roof now acted as a majestic **chimney draft**, pulling the haze upward in spirals so elegant it might’ve been choreographed by Pina Bausch.

Pascal had declared the airflow “*acceptable*,” and was now curled on a stack of journals he disapproved of.

Tiburty, reclining like a Roman senator watching his villa burn, raised his glass and asked:

“So, Mia, what’s your reverse engineering telling you, sweetheart?”

Mia, somewhere between **angry and mortified**, knelt by the **impact crater**, measuring its width and depth with academic precision and the haunted demeanor of someone recreating **Franz Reichelt’s final measurements**. She poked the **remaining thickness of the bureaucratic pancake** with a ruler that had seen better lifetimes.

She stood, blew a strand of hair from her face, and reported:

“Well… this is a *corpse*. And a *very splattered one*.”

Tiburty raised both arms in mock exaltation.

“Well done, sweetheart. Brilliant deductions. An absolute contribution to the history of observational science.”

Diderot, eyes half-lidded, swirling his scotch and pipe smoke like alchemical vapors, added solemnly:

“An antonomasia of a tautology, if ever there was one.”

Louis, lying on the floor with a notebook over his chest and a potted plant he was now calling *Nancy*, exhaled a long ribbon of smoke and murmured:

“Flattened bodies… just like during the Summer of Love.”

Pascal muttered: “You *flattened* people during the Summer of Love?”

Louis: “Not on purpose.”

Tiburty: “No one ever does.”

Mia turned around and snapped the ruler shut.
“Can I please have *five uninterrupted minutes* without drugs, metaphors, or flashbacks to countercultural manslaughter?”

The room went quiet.

Then Tiburty, nodding respectfully, said:

“Sure thing, sweetheart. Starting *now*.”

Borges woofed.

The ruler creaked back open.

Part 36: The Artifact

The room held its collective breath—or rather, released it upward in a slow swirl through the divine roof-hole, like incense from a monastery of dropouts.

Mia, now in *serious* mode (ponytail re-tightened, gloves double-checked), crouched again at the

crater, ruler in one hand, tweezers in the other, and **focused**. The splattered bureaucrat had yielded all he could in terms of surface analysis. But something *in* the impact... shimmered.

Tiburty, observing from his stool like a Renaissance pope watching a sinner squirm, whispered, **“What say you, High Priestess of What-the-Hell-Is-This?”**

Mia didn't answer. She was brushing aside layers of scorched tile, bone fragments, and what appeared to be a nametag reading "*Hi, I'm Reggie.*"

Then—

Tchink.

Her tweezers hit something.

Metal.

Cold. Embedded. Unbroken.

She leaned closer.

“There’s something down here.”

Diderot sat up, very suddenly alert.

Tiburty squinted. “What kind of something?”

Mia, voice steady:

“Something that *didn’t splatter.*”

With the care of someone defusing a
transdimensional boob trap, she extracted it.

A disk.

No bigger than her palm.

Smooth. Gleaming. Engraved with **symbols**—some
mathematical, some vaguely **astrological**, one that
might have been a barcode or a tiny saxophone.

The disk pulsed faintly. As if remembering.

Mia held it up.

Everyone leaned in.

Tiburty: “What *is* that?”

Mia: “It’s... not from *here*.”

Diderot, softly, like a bedtime ghost:

“It’s a *beacon*.”

Louis, blinking slowly:

“Do beacons usually fall inside bureaucrats?”

Pascal: “Only the really inefficient ones.”

Barko growled faintly.

Borges, voice low, ancient:

“That’s not just a beacon. That’s a *summoner*.”

Mia: “Meaning?”

Borges: “Meaning—someone’s not just ripping space-time. They’re *calling something through*.”

Everyone turned to the artifact.

It blinked once.

Then again.

Each blink faster.

Mia whispered, "I think it's... warming up."

Tiburty stood.

"Then we'd better get ready."

Part 37: Sabbath, Secrets, and Spin

Louis, still lying suspiciously horizontal on the floor like a man communing with quantum carpet patterns, raised a hand toward Mia.

"Can I see that closely?"

Mia hesitated, then passed the **pulsing disk** over.

Louis examined it like it was an old lover he sort of remembered from a drug-fueled jazz festival in '68.

Mumble... mumble... "Hmm... ridge spacing... concentric grooves... John, do you have a **record player** here?"

Tiburty, eyebrows slowly lifting to the top of his head:

“If I have a record player…”

He stood with the solemn pride of a wizard invoking his sacred relics. Walked to a **bookcase** by the far wall.

With one elegant motion, he pulled a book—**“On the Electrodynamics of Cool Things”**—one inch outward.

Click. Whir.

The entire **bookcase rotated** like a secret portal in a Cold War spy film, revealing a **glorious Hi-Fi temple**: polished wood, glowing tubes, turntable throne, and a record collection spanning from **Cannonball Adderley to Joe Zawinul**, arranged alphabetically and possibly blessed by Thelonious Monk himself.

Borges let out an impressed woof.

Pascal whispered, “I respect this.”

Louis handed the disk back to Mia.

"Put it on."

She placed it carefully on the turntable.

Needle dropped.

And through the room came:

“What is this that stands before me...”

Black Sabbath.

Very first track.

Everyone jumped.

Louis flailed. “No no no—**backwards!**”

Mia, already flipping switches like a DJ at a doomsday rave, reversed the rotation.

The riff reversed into a haunting wail.

Then: **static.**

Scratches.

Clicks.

And then—

“...I want you to stonewall it... stonewall it as much as possible...”

Silence.

Then again, clearer:

“...those tapes will never surface...”

Tiburty’s jaw dropped. “Oh my God. It’s the **Nixon tapes.**”

Diderot, grinning: “*The* missing minutes.”

Louis: “Hidden in a **space-time beacon**, disguised as a prog-metal vinyl pressed in another dimension. As one does.”

Pascal: “It always comes back to Nixon.”

Mia whispered, staring at the disk, “What *else* is in there?”

The disk clicked again.

The light **turned red**.

And something on the other side of the room **rumbled**.

Part 38: The Door of Denial

The light on the **disk** pulsed red now—**rhythmic**, like a heartbeat... or a countdown.

Then, with a high-pitched whine like a reel-to-reel gasping for breath, the voice of **Richard Nixon**, distorted and rasping, oozed from the speakers:

“—I don't give a good goddamn what they say in the press. You tell Kissinger to get me the—”

“...—and if the Church gets involved, I want their names on a list—”

Then static.

A **click**.

And... *a sound*.

A sound not meant for ears that existed **solely in this dimension**.

It was like a **door unlocking**, but not a physical door.

Not wood.

Not steel.

A door made of **information**.

Of **omissions**.

Of **erased memory and denied truth**.

A panel on the far wall of Tiburty's office—plain drywall, no seams, no hinges—**shimmered**.

Then cracked.

The crack **spiderwebbed**, glowing faintly, until the entire panel **peeled open like paper**, revealing—

A hallway.

Long. Dim. Flickering with greenish fluorescents
that hummed like angry mosquitoes.

The floor was linoleum.

The air was **musty**, like old tape reels and classified
dossiers soaked in sweat and cologne.

At the end of the hallway stood a **metal door**, sealed
tight, marked only with:

**PROPERTY OF THE UNITED STATES
GOVERNMENT – DO NOT ENTER**

And below it:

SUB-REALITY ARCHIVE 17-B

Tiburty stood frozen, scotch glass trembling.

**“No one has spoken of Sub-Reality Archive 17-B
since—”**

Louis: “Since what?”

Tiburty: “...Since no one knew it existed.”

Mia: “Do we go in?”

Diderot: “We never ask that, sweetheart. *We just go.*”

Pascal: “I’m staying here. I draw the line at Republican-themed horror.”

Max whined.

Borges barked.

Barko was already walking toward the door like a good boy who smelled a cosmic bone.

Tiburty drained the rest of his glass.

“Alright,” he said, eyes gleaming.

“Let’s go see what Nixon tried to bury between the lines of time.”

Part 39: Arming for the Archive

As the strange humming from **Sub-Reality Archive 17-B** deepened—like bureaucracy singing from the

bowels of hell—**Tiburty** turned, calm as a man preparing a barbecue.

“But first… take these.”

He strode to his **PhD diploma** framed on the wall. Gently touched the glass.

Click.

A **panel slid open** with the elegance of a Bond villain’s closet.

Behind it: **a rack of rifles**, a **tray of pistols**, and a faint golden light like holy fire shining on human defiance.

Tiburty reached up and took down a **Modello 91 Carcano rifle**, glinting with purpose, its scope a **4×18 Ordnance Optics**, the walnut stock lovingly polished.

Louis, stunned: “Is that…”

Tiburty, pocketing two boxes of 6.5×54mm Mannlicher, replied with pride:
“Exact replica. Built it myself.”

Álvaro’s eyes lit up. His hand drifted toward a Harrington & Richardson 5-shot .32 revolver, glinting dull and worn, like it had already seen too much and would gladly see more.

“I *know* this one,” he whispered, caressing it like an old flame.

“Also your replica?”

Tiburty, almost reverent:

“Oh no, my friend. That’s the *real deal*.”

Diderot cradled it like a philosopher holding a newborn concept.

Louis, expression darkening with historical clarity, eyed a Röhm RG-14 .22 revolver, barely functional, almost absurd in its minimalism.

He picked it up.

“I know *this* one too. It slightly missed once.”

He clicked it open. Checked the chamber.

“We’re not going to make the same mistake again.”

And then—

Mia, silent amid all the armament, reached up to the shelf and picked a **random book**. It opened in her hands—**not with words, but fire.**

On the inner cover, Tiburty’s signature stamp gleamed:

“This machine kills fascists.”

She looked up.

“The word is mightier than the bullet.”

Tiburty, bolting the Carcano with a *click-clack* that echoed through time:

“Well said, Mia.”

He slung the rifle over his shoulder.

“Let’s go.”

The group stepped into the hallway.

The door to Archive 17-B was waiting.

And this time—**history was going to be rewritten properly.**

1

From the Tiburty Archives – Historical Contextualization and Symbolic Meaning of the Weapons Chosen by Our Heroes

In preparation for their descent into **Sub-Reality Archive 17-B**, our unlikely task force arms themselves not only with weaponry, but with **symbols**—each artifact chosen not by chance, but as a deliberate nod to **ruptures in history, failed illusions, and unfinished revolutions**. Below is a breakdown of each weapon and its historical weight.

1. Modello 91 Carcano Rifle

Bearer: *Professor John Tiburty*

Historical Use: Famously used by **Lee Harvey Oswald** in the assassination of **President John F. Kennedy** in 1963.

Symbolic Meaning:

A weapon of state destabilization. By choosing an exact replica of the Oswald rifle, Tiburty embraces the **mythos of doubt**, the fracture point where trust in institutional narratives collapsed. It represents the moment history was no longer something experienced—it was something **theorized**.

This is not just a rifle. It is a **trigger for conspiracy itself**.

2. Harrington & Richardson 5-Shot .32

Revolver

Bearer: *Álvaro Diderot*

Historical Use: Used by **Gaetano Bresci** in 1900 to assassinate **King Umberto I of Italy**, in retaliation for the Bava Beccaris massacre.

Symbolic Meaning:

This is the **weapon of the anarchist**, the self-declared executioner of state injustice. Bresci's act was a direct answer to military repression and class violence. By wielding it, Diderot aligns himself with the **revolutionary gesture**, the act of personal justice outside bureaucratic channels.

In his hands, it becomes not just a firearm—but a **gesture of moral insubordination**.

3. Röhm RG-14 .22 Revolver

Bearer: *Louis Barry*

Historical Use: Used by **John Hinckley Jr.** in 1981 to shoot **President Ronald Reagan**. The bullet ricocheted and missed Reagan's heart by inches.

Symbolic Meaning:

A gun of **near-failure**, of **misdirected intent**, and **distorted obsession**. It carries the weight of **what could have been**, of **missed impact**, and of **history derailed by accident**.

Louis's decision to carry it is a reclamation of that mistake—a vow not to **miss again**, symbolically or literally.

4. “This Machine Kills Fascists” – The Book

Bearer: *Mia*

Historical Reference: Inscribed on the guitar of **Woody Guthrie**, the American folk singer who used his music as a political weapon against fascism,

racism, and inequality during the 1940s.

Symbolic Meaning:

The book is the **intellectual counterweight** to the firearms. It declares that **ideas**—sharpened, performed, and projected—can be just as dangerous, just as penetrating, as any bullet.

Mia chooses a weapon of **resonance** over recoil. She doesn't fight by shooting. She fights by **rewriting**.

Conclusion:

The weapons chosen are not tools of violence—they are **chapters of history**, reloaded. Each one speaks to a different method of resistance, a different crack in the façade of power:

- The **conspiratorial rifle** of lost innocence.
- The **anarchist's pistol** of righteous vengeance.
- The **ricocheting revolver** of near-missed destiny.

- And the **book as blade**, word as warcry.

Together, they step into the archive not as soldiers—but as **witnesses**, **corrections**, and **reminders** that history never forgets... even if reality tries to bury it.

Part 40: Archive 17-B

The door stood before them.

Metal. Heavy. Uncompromising.

Stenciled across it in institutional lettering:

PROPERTY OF THE UNITED
STATES GOVERNMENT
SUB-REALITY ARCHIVE 17-B
AUTHORIZED PERSONNEL ONLY
(That means not you.)

Tiburty stepped forward first, Carcano rifle slung over his shoulder, eyes narrowed not in fear—but in

recognition.

This wasn't new. This was long overdue.

He reached for the handle.

Mia held the book like a shield, spine cracked open to a page that read "*Property is theft*" in angry red ink.

Diderot adjusted the revolver in his coat, lit his pipe, and murmured:

"I hope they filed truth under fiction."

Louis checked the Röhm. "If we find a room marked 'Watergate II: The Sequel,' I'm turning around."

The door opened with a hydraulic *hiss*, not so much swinging as **unsealing**.

Beyond it: a descending concrete **stairwell**, painted the color of military denial. The lights flickered with Cold War anxiety. At the bottom, a second door. No label. Just... waiting.

They walked.

Each step echoed with the weight of centuries,
cover-ups, and canceled revolutions.

They reached the bottom.

Tiburty gave a nod. Louis opened the second door.

And there it was.

Archive 17-B.

A cavernous space. Rows upon rows of filing
cabinets. Metal drawers. Reel-to-reel recorders still
running with no one there. CRT monitors
flickering. Vinyls. Microfilm. Floppy disks. A single
Betamax. One rotary phone ringing continuously.

And in the center of it all: a **table**.

On it: a single **folder**, glowing faintly.

Pascal, perched now on Mia's shoulder, narrowed
his feline eyes.

“It’s never a good sign when paper glows.”

Tiburty picked it up.

Stamped across the top:

PROJECT: PALIMPSEST

*Chrono-Architectural Protocol for
Erasing Historical Layers and
Replacing Them With Official
Narratives*

Mia gasped.

Louis dropped his cigarette.

Diderot exhaled through his teeth:

**“They weren’t just covering history up... they were
rewriting it.”**

Tiburty opened the file.

Inside: names. Maps. Obituaries with *incorrect
dates*. News clippings with *revised headlines*. Entire
revolutions reduced to footnotes.

One sheet simply read: “Woodstock – Redacted as Myth.”

And then: a schematic.

Louis stared.

“That’s my design.”

Mia whispered:

“They’ve been using your stabilizer not to protect planes... but to edit reality.”

Tiburty closed the folder.

“We’re not in a sub-archive. We’re in the editing room.”

And somewhere behind them, something **clicked**.

The door was no longer open.

It was **locked**.

Part 41: The Editor Appears

The silence in **Archive 17-B** was sterile, clinical, unnatural.

Then—

Click. Click. Click.

Wooden shoe heels on polished concrete. Echoing like a typewriter tapping out its final obituary.

From between the endless rows of forgotten facts and government fiction, a **man** appeared, arms full of overstuffed folders, each marked with classifications like "**REDACTED,**" "**RECONTEXTUALIZED,**" and "**NEVER HAPPENED.**"

He paused when he saw them. Adjusted his glasses. Squinted through the fluorescence.

"Who are you?" he asked, tone flat and bureaucratic, like someone who used to sentence countries to collapse before breakfast.

Tiburty, eyes locked in and unblinking, whispered:

“I *know* who you are.”

All heads turned.

Everyone except Mia gasped in perfect horror:

“Kissinger!”

Mia, confused, blinked.

“Kissing me? That *cockroach*? *No way*. Send him back under the rock he crawled out of.”

Tiburty didn’t even smirk.

He raised the **Modello 91 Carcano**, calm as morning rain.

“With *tremendous* pleasure.”

BOOM.

The *6.5 × 54mm Mannlicher* round thundered through the archive like history demanding revenge.

Kissinger's head snapped back—half missing in a red-black spray of aged corruption and formaldehyde.

Skull fragments **pinged** against file cabinets.

Folders **flew**.

His body **slumped** to the ground like a lie finally collapsing.

Silence.

Tiburty, exhaling as he bolted another round into the chamber:

“Boy, this feels good.”

Diderot, stepping over the corpse, eyes alight:

“And the *adventure* begins.”

In the flickering overhead light, the archive didn't scream.

It **whispered**.

And the whispers were saying: *They know you're here now.*

Part 42: The Archive of Babel Rewritten

Álvaro looked around.

The room they were in was **hexagonal**.

Around them, an **indefinite number of identical hexagonal galleries**, each stacked with drawers, folders, tapes, reels, cabinets.

You could see one after another, endlessly, receding into the silence of bureaucratic oblivion.

He whispered:

“This is… the Archive of Babel.”

This Archive is *total*—perfect, complete, and whole—and its shelves contain all possible permutations of **classified documentation, internal memos, and redacted reports**. A number which, though unimaginably vast, is not infinite.

That is, it contains **all that has ever been fabricated, concealed, denied, or manipulated** by states, regimes, agencies, and institutions in every known tongue and protocol.

All—

The **detailed post-mortem of events that never officially occurred.**

The **classified operations of the future.**

The **autobiographies of deceased spies who never existed.**

The **complete index of the archive itself,**

Thousands and thousands of false indexes,

The proof of the falsity of those false indexes,

A rebuttal proving the falsity of the true index,

The alternative Warren Report,

The commentary on the Warren Report,
The counter-commentary funded by an oil
conglomerate,
The true story of your death in an operation no one
authorized,
The translation of every intelligence dossier into
every language,
The insertion of every memo into every case file,
The report that J. Edgar Hoover might have written
(but didn't) on the sexual psychology of union
leaders,
The lost briefings of Operation Gladio.

Every cover-up.

Every leak.

Every plausible denial given shape, given paper,
given life.

And all around them—**silence.**

The silence of stacked truths no one dares read.

Mia stood breathless.

Tiburty whispered, “We’ve stepped into the engine room of reality.”

And **Diderot** added:

“And now that we’re here… we could rewrite it all.”

Part 43: Obvious Revelations

As the team stood in the impossible **hexagonal abyss** of truth, fiction, and everything in between, **Mia**, ever the curious spark in a room full of burned-out firebrands, wandered toward a cabinet.

She opened it casually, reached in, and pulled a **random folder**, thick with age and stamped with four different agency seals—all crossed out.

She flipped it open.

Read a line.

Then another.

Eyes widened.

“Hey guys,” she called out, waving the file.

“Wanna know who killed Kennedy?”

Without turning, without hesitation, without even looking up from their grim familiarity with the absurd, the three men—**Tiburty, Diderot, and Louis**—responded in a **single, unified groan:**

“WE KNOW.”

Mia blinked.

Paused.

Gently closed the folder and slid it back into place.

“Okay okay, no need to shout… *geez*…”

Pascal, from a perch above, flicked his tail.

“Next she’s going to ask who orchestrated the moon landing.”

Louis, muttering: “Which one?”

The archive hummed softly, like a server dreaming.

Part 44: The Philosophy of Mis-Education

Mia, flipping through another drawer, pulled out a file labeled *ORNITHOLOGY* in large red letters.

She opened it expecting birds.

Her eyebrows arched.

“Ornithology? Operation Condor?”

Álvaro gasped, hand to chest like a scandalized abuelita.

“¡Por Dios! ¿Qué le enseñan a estos niños hoy en día?”

Tiburty, rifle slung casually across his back, let out a long, bitter sigh.

He didn’t look at her—he looked at the Archive itself.

“They make them memorize dates of battles, so they think history is *numbers*.

So they can be quizzed on Jeopardy and feel *smart*.
Fill them with *notions*, keep them *clueless*, and
make sure they stay *obedient*.”

Louis, nodding solemnly, added like a man quoting graffiti from the back wall of time:

“Keep ‘em dumb.

Keep ‘em calm.

Keep ‘em shopping.

Produci, consuma e crepa.”

(*Produce, consume, and drop dead.*)

Pascal, stretching from atop a Cold War cabinet, muttered:

“And when they ask questions, give them a scholarship. And a job. And a calendar. That should quiet them down.”

Mia shut the folder. “Okay. I get it. We’re in the belly of the beast.”

Tiburty looked at her, eyes sharp.

“No, sweetheart. This isn’t the belly.”

He pointed to the glowing floor beneath them.

“This is the *colon*. Where the truth gets digested and flushed out clean.”

Diderot: “And we’re the bacteria now.”

Shall we go on to Part 45—as the group finds their own names within the archive, and realize they've been in the system far longer than they thought?

Part 45: Memory and Fire

The air had shifted.

Even in a room built from deception, disinformation, and denial, something *real*—*painfully* real—rose between the cracks.

Tiburty, holding a faded dossier marked *CHILE*
1973, eyes shimmering with grief unforbidden,
whispered with the reverence of a prayer:

***“Mucho más temprano que tarde, de nuevo abrirán
las grandes alamedas por donde pase el hombre
libre...”***

*(Sooner rather than later, the great avenues will
open again, where the free man shall walk.)*

Louis, barely able to breathe, let his voice rise, low
and defiant:

“El pueblo unido jamás será vencido...”

(The people united will never be defeated.)

Álvaro, eyes shut tight, head bowed, raised a
clenched fist.

“Hasta siempre, compañero presidente.

¡Venceremos!”

(Forever, comrade president. We shall overcome.)

Mia, blinking, caught in the gravity of it all,
whispered:
“...?”

The silence held.

Pascal said nothing—for once.

Then Tiburty turned to her gently, with the sorrow
of one who knows the difference between footnotes
and funerals.

“Mia,” he said, “what we’re standing in... this
archive... it’s where they filed the murder of a
country. Under ‘foreign interests.’”

Louis nodded. “What they called *security*, we called
betrayal.”

Diderot: “And what they buried as a statistic, we
carry as a song.”

Mia closed her eyes for a moment.

Then opened them—fierce, clear.

“Then let’s make sure they never file another name in silence.”

And from somewhere—maybe the ceiling, maybe the past—a single, ghostly voice echoed back:

“Allende... presente.”

**From the Diderot Archive of Collected Lectures
Historic Contextualization and Explanation of
References in Part 45**

In this segment, the characters' emotional response to discovering the hidden record of **Operation Condor**—a U.S.-supported transnational campaign of political repression and assassination across Latin America in the 1970s and 1980s—invokes a series of historically and emotionally charged phrases, each

tied to real figures, resistance movements, and collective trauma. Below is an annotated explanation of each reference.

1. “Mucho más temprano que tarde, de nuevo abrirán las grandes alamedas por donde pase el hombre libre.”

Speaker in story: *Tiburty*

Origin: Final public speech of **Salvador Allende**, President of Chile, broadcast on radio as he was besieged inside **La Moneda Palace** during the military coup of **September 11, 1973**.

Translation: “Much sooner than later, the great avenues will open once more where free men shall walk.”

Context:

This line became a **symbol of democratic hope** after the violent toppling of Allende’s socialist government by **General Augusto Pinochet**, backed

by the CIA. It marks not only Allende's final words before his death (believed to be suicide), but a prophecy of eventual liberation.

2. “El pueblo unido jamás será vencido.”

Speaker in story: *Louis*

Origin: Title and chorus of a revolutionary song written by **Sergio Ortega** and popularized by the Chilean group **Quilapayún** in 1973.

Translation: “The people united will never be defeated.”

Context:

This became an **international anthem of resistance**, particularly during and after the Pinochet regime. It spread across Latin America and into global protest movements as a call for **solidarity against oppression**, often sung by crowds during uprisings and demonstrations.

3. “Hasta siempre, compañero presidente. ¡Venceremos!”

Speaker in story: *Álvaro Diderot*

Origin: Phrase drawing on two symbolic references:

- “**Hasta siempre**” (“Until forever”) is famously associated with the farewell to **Che Guevara**, immortalized in the Cuban revolutionary song “*Hasta Siempre, Comandante.*”
- “**¡Venceremos!**” (“We shall overcome”) was the title of the **Chilean Unidad Popular coalition anthem**, supporting Allende’s presidency.

Context:

The phrase “**Hasta siempre, compañero presidente**” frames **Allende** as a martyred comrade-president in the revolutionary imagination.

“**¡Venceremos!**” reaffirms commitment to **the struggle, not its outcome**, and stands in

defiance of regimes that try to rewrite or erase that struggle from history.

4. “Allende… presente.”

Spoken by: *Echoed voice (implied collective memory)*

Origin: The chant “[Name]… presente” is a form of symbolic invocation used throughout Latin American protest culture.

Meaning:

To say “**Allende, presente**” is not just to remember him, but to declare that his **legacy is alive**, active, and participating in the current struggle. It is both mourning and mobilization.

Summary of Meaning:

These references, when brought together in the fictional moment of Archive 17-B, connect personal resistance to the **collective historical memory** of repression and rebellion. They frame the fictional universe's exploration of hidden truths within a **very real political lineage**: one where erasure, denial, and state-sanctioned violence were resisted not just with weapons, but with songs, speeches, and the stubborn survival of memory.

This is a moment in the story where the **fictional archive** mirrors the **real-world fight against silence**, and the characters acknowledge that their battle is not just for knowledge—but for **dignity, justice, and historical reckoning**.

End of Lecture Note – Archive Reference #DID-L45-A

Filed under: *Collective Memory, Political*

*Assassinations, Latin America, Resistance
Literature*

Part 46: The Great Reversal

The cold hum of **Archive 17-B** still droned around them—eternal, indifferent, cataloging their every breath into a subfolder labeled *irrelevant until dangerous*.

Louis, staring at the twisting architecture of the hexagonal maze, traced his finger along a stairwell that spiraled upward, lined with cables, data reels, and forgotten uprisings.

He muttered, dryly:

“So… shall we climb up this intestine and find the mouth?”

Mia, brushing dust off her gloves, didn’t miss a beat:

“This is political lubeless anal.”

Tiburty, with rare reverence:

“Well said, sweetheart.”

Álvaro, eyes blazing like a mad saint on a revolution binge, raised his fist, revolver still in hand:

“Then let’s *buttfuck the system.*”

There was no irony.

There was no pause.

Only purpose.

The four of them stood like the ending of a half-lost gospel, surrounded by **the recorded sins of empire**, preparing not just to climb—but to *purge*.

Pascal, atop a cabinet, sighed.

“You know it’s serious when the metaphors start getting anatomical.”

Max barked.

Barko growled softly.

Borges howled—long, low, and righteous.

And so, with rifles, pipe smoke, revolutions
unsanitized and unredacted, they began the
ascent—

—up the **bureaucratic colon**, toward the **lying mouth**
at the top of the world.

Part 47: The Climb Begins

Chapter 1: The Invention of Obedience

The hexagonal rooms spiraled upward like the
intestines of a wounded god, each chamber a
grotesque reliquary of **political fabrication**, each
step dragging them deeper into the underbelly of
manufactured truth.

They entered the **first chamber**.

The walls flickered to life, not with screens, but with **engraved smoke**, glowing softly with the radiance of archived deceit.

Chapter 1: The Invention of Obedience

Date: Unknown.

Location: The first campfire.

Subject: The first political lie ever spoken by a human to another.

A voice—not mechanical, not human, but *official*—spoke from nowhere:

“Here begins the historical record of control. The foundational myth of order. The first time one man looked another in the eye and said: ‘You must obey—for your own good.’”

Scene 1: The Fire

A **tribal leader**, unnamed, robed in soot and certainty, stands before his people. Behind him, the stars. Before him, **the unknown**.

He raises a hand and says:

“I speak to the fire. The fire speaks to me.”

The others kneel. They do not hear the fire.
But they believe.

He continues:

“The fire told me the meat must be shared my way. That it is angry when others speak freely. That it chooses me as mouthpiece.”

The First Law is born.

Not written—but spoken.

Not from divine origin, but **self-appointed narrative**.

And it works.

Scene 2: The Symbols

A child draws a spiral in the dirt. The leader frowns.

“That is not a proper symbol. Use only these marks.”

From a pouch, he produces the **first codified icon**—a crude glyph, simple, but **repeatable**.

He tells them:

“These are the marks of truth. Use others, and the fire will punish.”

The people comply.

And so begins the **tyranny of consistency**.

Scene 3: The Threat

A rival questions the leader.

“Why should we trust you?”

The leader answers, solemn:

“Because the fire will strike you
down.”

It does not.

But the leader's **stone axe** does.

And the others **nod**.

Truth is no longer what is.

It is what can be enforced.

Tiburty, watching the room, whispers:

“The first government was just a man and a story.”

Mia, jaw clenched:

“And the first citizen was a man too scared to question it.”

Álvaro, eyes burning:

“The system was born the moment fear became sacred.”

Louis, softly:

“And we've been building temples to it ever since.”

The door to the next chamber clicked open.

And above it, a title etched in smoke:

Chapter 2: The Birth of the Crown

Part 48: Chapter 2 — The Birth of the Crown

Subtitle: Theater, Incest, and Divine Voiceovers

The second hexagonal chamber opened with a low *creak*, like a rusty scroll being unrolled across time.

Inside, the air was **thicker**, the symbols on the walls **golden**, embossed like ceremonial medals awarded for surviving a lie. A dull light flickered above them—steady, judgmental, and smug.

Above the door, engraved:

Chapter 2: The Birth of the Crown

“Rule is most effective when mistaken for destiny.”

A voice, deeper now, more baritone, more ceremonial—like a high priest narrating a war crime with perfect diction—spoke:

“Here begins the epoch of kings—not chosen, but claimed. Not earned, but imagined. The power of power lies not in conquest, but in costume.”

Scene 1: The First Crown

A man, fat with harvest and fear, takes the bones of his father, grinds them into powder, and **wears them on his head.**

“This is my crown,” he says.

“My father speaks through me.”

His brother, stronger, smarter, better—kneels.

Why?

Because the people **see the bones** and hear the word **“blood.”**

Blood = Right.

The myth is **not believed**—

It is **respected.**

Scene 2: The Incest Clause

To prevent blood from mixing with truth, the king weds his **sister.**

Or his **niece**.

Or his **daughter**.

The voice of the Archive adds:

*“A lineage must be made circular. If
the people can’t trace the lie, they
assume it’s eternal.”*

A family tree becomes a **noose**, looped tightly
around time.

The madness begins.

So does the **genealogical justification** for genocide.

Scene 3: The Divine Voiceover

The king steps onto a platform. The crowd waits.

The sky thunders.

A priest appears and proclaims:

“The sky has spoken. God has chosen
this man.”

The king coughs into his sleeve and nods solemnly.

A well-placed **smoke machine** puffs behind him.
Thunder claps again. A boy behind a curtain waves
a tin sheet.

The people fall to their knees.

Thus is born **divine right**.

And thus, **power is no longer accountable**. It is
celestial.

Diderot, pacing slowly, revolver in hand:

“This isn’t leadership. It’s pageantry with body
count.”

Tiburty, rifle resting at his hip:

“And people followed it not because they believed it—but because they feared being alone in doubt.”

Mia, flipping through a folder marked *Anglican Bloodlines and Acceptable Madness*, mutters:

“They industrialized incest to preserve a lie.”

Louis, staring at a crumbling crown sealed in glass:
“And then called it tradition.”

Another door creaked open.

This one heavier, older. A musky stench wafted out—**coin mold, dried ink, and sweat.**

Etched in tarnished brass:

Chapter 3: The Birth of the Economy

“Invent imaginary numbers, and the people will enslave themselves voluntarily.”

Part 49: Chapter 3 — The Birth of the Economy
Subtitle: Invent Imaginary Numbers, and the People
Will Enslave Themselves Voluntarily

The third chamber hissed open.

The scent hit them first—**sweat, ink**, and the distinct metallic tang of **copper coins kissed by desperation**.

This chamber was different. It buzzed. Not with electricity, but with **calculation**—as if every number ever whispered in greed was still trying to balance itself somewhere between the floor tiles.

Etched above the threshold:

Chapter 3: The Birth of the Economy

*"Invent imaginary numbers, and the
people will enslave themselves
voluntarily."*

The Archive's voice returned. Cold. Professional.
Bankerly.

*“Here begins the science of scarcity.
The art of subtraction made sacred.
The system where **value is invented,**
need is engineered, and **debt becomes**
a chain more binding than iron.”*

Scene 1: The First Coin

A man trades a loaf of bread for a fish.

His neighbor watches and says:

“Too simple. Let’s improve this.”

He molds **metal** into **discs**, stamps his **face** onto one,
and says:

“This is worth something because I say so.”

The bread is forgotten. The fish dies.

But the **coin remains**.

Mia: “They made metal speak louder than hunger.”

Scene 2: The Invention of Debt

A man borrows two coins.

Next week, he repays three.

“Why three?”

“Because I waited.”

Thus, interest is born.

Time becomes taxable.

Another man can't pay.

He is given a **contract**, which replaces the coins.

The coins become irrelevant.

The debt remains eternal.

Tiburty: “From now on, you don't need wealth. Just the **illusion** of obligation.”

Scene 3: God Becomes a Banker

A priest declares:

“God wants you to tithe ten percent.”

A noble agrees.

The poor give what they don't have.

A merchant steps in:

“I'll lend them the ten percent.”

A **cycle** begins:

- Pay the priest.
- Owe the merchant.
- Starve the children.
- Worship the system.

Diderot: “In Rome, they used chains. In London, they used credit.”

Louis: “Now they just give you a card and say *enjoy yourself*.”

The room shimmered, walls lined with stock certificates, war bonds, credit agreements, and cryptocurrency whitepapers, all sharing the same dirty fingerprints.

Mia, picking up a note titled *“Theory of Consumer Attachment: Design, Scarcity, Addiction”*, scoffed:

“They turned desire into a leash.”

Tiburty, nodding:

“And sold us the idea that freedom meant buying the leash ourselves.”

The next door creaked open.

This one glowed faintly **red**. The air inside pulsed.

Above it, carved into a wall of military gray:

Chapter 4: The Birth of the State of War

*“Peace is temporary. War is eternal.
But war is most profitable when it is
almost won.”*

**Part 50: Chapter 4 — The Birth of the State of War
Subtitle: Peace Is Temporary. War Is Eternal. But
War Is Most Profitable When It Is Almost Won.**

They stepped into the **fourth chamber**, and everything changed.

The lights were dimmer here, flickering like exhausted searchlights. The walls were **lined not with shelves, but with weapon racks, propaganda posters, conscription papers, and flags folded into perfect triangles.**

A distant, looping echo of marching boots played just beneath the surface—**not loud enough to hear, but too persistent to ignore.**

Above them, engraved in blackened iron:

Chapter 4: The Birth of the State of War

*“Peace is temporary. War is eternal.
But war is most profitable when it is
almost won.”*

The Archive’s voice was different now. Louder.
Barking commands like a drill sergeant from the
bowels of hell.

*“Here begins the era where
destruction is not an accident, but an
industry. Where soldiers become
assets, and enemies become resources.
Where the line between defense and
domination is dissolved in **profit**
margins and political theater.”*

Scene 1: The First Pretext

Two tribes. A contested river.

One man crosses it, steals a chicken.

The leader of the larger tribe stands before his people and says:

“They hate our freedom. This aggression will not stand.”

He sends ten warriors.

Then a hundred.

Then he burns the other village and builds a fort.

The chicken was **never the point**.

Louis: “And the poor kid who took it? Still roasted alive in textbooks as a cautionary tale.”

Scene 2: The Economy of War

A king asks:

“How shall we fund this noble
crusade?”

A banker responds:

“I’ll lend it to you. With interest.”

A blacksmith responds:

“I’ll forge the swords.”

A mother asks:

“Will you bring my son home?”

They do not respond.

The king dies rich.

The banker dies richer.

The blacksmith gets a government contract.

The mother gets a folded flag and a thank-you note.

Diderot: “The dead are buried in dirt. The rich are
buried in footnotes.”

Scene 3: The War on Ideas

A man stands on a corner and shouts:

“Why are we fighting?”

They arrest him for treason.

A woman writes a poem about peace.

Her home is raided.

A child draws a dove on a chalkboard.

He is suspended from school.

Mia: “Peace is the one thing they never learned how to tax.”

Tiburty: “That’s why they made sure it never lasts.”

In the center of the room stood a **display case**.

Inside:

- A piece of shrapnel from a false flag operation.
- A boot worn by a conscript who died in a war that never officially existed.
- A broken dog tag labeled *"Unknown Enemy #3."*

Pascal, perched atop a retired drone, muttered:

**"War is when the government tells you who to hate.
Revolution is when you decide for yourself."**

The next door was sealed with **steel bolts**, glowing faint **green**.

On it, carved in careful, bureaucratic cursive:

Chapter 5: The Birth of Surveillance

"You are no longer punished for

disobedience. You are punished for suspicion.”

Part 51: Chapter 5 — The Birth of Surveillance
Subtitle: You Are No Longer Punished for
Disobedience. You Are Punished for Suspicion.

The **fifth chamber** opened not with a creak, but with a **soft chime**—mechanical, artificial, and eerily cheerful. The sound of a **login notification**, a **welcome screen**, a **compliance update**.

Inside, the room was **perfectly white**, **perfectly clean**, and **perfectly watchful**.

Dozens of eyes—**cameras, orbs, lenses**, and glowing red dots—tracked every move. They didn’t hide. **They stared.**

Above them, etched in brushed aluminum like a product slogan:

Chapter 5: The Birth of Surveillance
“You are no longer punished for

disobedience. You are punished for suspicion.”

The Archive’s voice returned. This time, modulated. Friendly.

Like a voice assistant ready to betray you.

“Here begins the age where truth is no longer extracted by force—but by consent.

*Where you do not hide from power—
you broadcast yourself to it.*

*Where guilt is not proven—it is
predicted.”*

Scene 1: The First Watching

A city builds a tower.

A man stands at its top, overlooking everyone. He says:

“If I see you steal, I will punish you.”

The next day, no one steals.

He doesn't have to look.

He just has to say he might.

Mia: “They replaced omniscience with rumor. And called it justice.”

Scene 2: The Device

A man invents a box that listens. He sells it.

“It's convenient,” he says.

People bring it into their homes.

It listens to them cook, fight, dream, confess.

The government buys the recordings.

“To protect you,” they say.

Louis: “They sold us surveillance as a lifestyle.”

Scene 3: The Algorithm

A woman walks down a street. Her phone vibrates.

She’s denied access to the train.

“Flagged,” the machine says.

“Why?” she asks.

“Behavioral inconsistency,” it answers.

She has never broken a law.

She just hesitated at a red light too long.

She paused when a soldier passed.

She **acted like someone who might not comply.**

Tiburty: “The future of tyranny isn’t punishment.
It’s *preemption*.”

Diderot: “They call it *security*. But it’s just a cage made of probabilities.”

In the center of the room, on a pedestal, was a single object:

A **mirror**.

When they approached, it **displayed their digital profiles**—meticulously constructed, including entries from private dreams, browser history, even moments they had forgotten.

Underneath each profile:

"Trust Rating: 3.2 — Monitoring Active"

Pascal: “We are not watched because we are dangerous.

We are dangerous **because we are watched.**”

The next door was made of glass, but you could only see **yourself** in it. No hinges. No handle.

Above it, etched in bold text like a terms-of-service update:

Chapter 6: The Birth of the Self

*“You are not who you are. You are
who they think you are.”*

Part 52: Interlude — The Bar Between Truths

They stepped into the next chamber expecting more lies, more smoke, more godless architecture of power.

Instead—

A bar.

A real one.

Wooden counter, scratched from decades of elbows and spilled secrets.

Low lighting, warm like the memory of something you never lived but miss anyway.

A sign above the shelves read:

**“It’s a painful journey. We know.
Have a drink to cheer the spirit.”**

The room was empty except for the five of them and the **bartender**, who said nothing, only nodded with knowing eyes and polished glasses that didn’t need polishing.

From an unseen speaker came the opening riff of a song so absurdly inappropriate it felt perfect.

"Tequila" by The Champs.

The saxophone looped.
The rhythm climbed.
And then—

“Tequila!”

All four—**Tiburty, Diderot, Louis, and Mia**—slammed their fists on the counter in unison and yelled it like a sacred invocation:

“TEQUILA!”

Four **shots** appeared, no words exchanged.

They downed them.

The song looped.

“TEQUILA!”

Four more.

Again.

Again.

Mia tried to keep pace with the Old Guard, but by round five she was **laughing under the table**, hugging Pascal and muttering about algorithmic betrayal and four-dimensional margaritas.

The others?

They were **hammered**.

Drunk as a forgotten truth.

Flushed, swaying, gloriously alive.

And then it began.

The Storytelling Duel.

Tiburty, slamming his glass down:

“There I was in '87, Berlin wall behind me, a bolt cutter in one hand, a love letter in the other. NATO told me I was mad. I told them I was *in love*.”

Diderot, waving his revolver around for emphasis:

“That’s nothing. I once convinced a Vatican cardinal to grant me asylum while I was actively setting fire to his wine cellar. Quoting Aquinas. In Latin. Naked.”

Louis, eyes unfocused, voice solemn:

“Siberia. Winter of ‘79. Traded a toothbrush for uranium. Don’t ask why. Just know I still have the toothbrush.”

Tiburty, leaning into Diderot:

“You remember Algiers? The mime?”

Diderot:

“The *one-legged* mime who smuggled plutonium inside his prosthesis? *Do I remember?* I baptized his parrot!”

Louis:

“You never baptized the parrot, Álvaro. I did. With absinthe.”

The bar roared with laughter, the saxophone looped again, the world outside forgotten.

Under the table, Mia whispered to Pascal:

“They’re insane.”

Pascal:

“They’re the only ones who remember what sanity used to look like.”

And somewhere—deep beneath the bar—a **door** waited, just out of sight.

But not tonight.

Tonight was **Tequila**.

Part 53: The Morning After the Truth

The world spun.

Not metaphorically.

Literally.

Like the booth Mia woke up in had been mounted
on a **lazy Susan from hell**.

She groaned, turned over, and **puked** with the
dignity of a fallen empress—right into a half-empty
pint glass someone had kindly left nearby.

She tried to sit up.

Big mistake.

Her brain was being **pounded by a wrecking ball**
operated by **a sadistic foreman** with no ear
protection.

She blinked.

The **bar still existed**.

The lights were too warm. The floor was too

horizontal. And the **barman**, still polishing a glass that **definitely didn't need it**, stared at her with the serene wisdom of a man who'd seen **every revolution fail** and still showed up to pour the drinks.

Mia:

"Gatorade... aspirin... a puke bucket... please, in any order, just... mercy."

From across the bar came **cheerful cruelty**.

"Good morning, sweetheart!"

She squinted.

Tiburty. Diderot. Louis.

Fresh as newborn revolts. **Showered. Shaved.**

Dressed in new clothes. Where from? Who knew.

Who cared. It was **black ops fashion logic**.

They sat at the bar with **pints of Bloody Marys**, garnished with celery, olives, existential nonchalance.

Tiburty raised his glass.

“Slept well?”

Mia clutched her skull.

“What are you guys even made of?”

Tiburty, with the sincerity of a stone:

“Nicotine, guts, and regrets.”

Diderot nodded.

Louis nodded.

The bartender nodded.

Pascal, from his perch on a gin bottle, nodded.

Barko, Max, and Borges all nodded in unison like
hairy sages.

Louis, raising his glass:

“You’ll get there.”

Mia, dry-mouthed, broken, and pale, managed one
word:

“...fuck.”

Tiburty:

“Language, sweetheart. We're philosophers.”

And he took a long, defiant sip.

Behind them, the door to the next chamber unlocked with a soft *ding*, like an elevator arriving in hell.

Part 54: The Nixon Jukebox

Before entering **Chapter 6**, the group paused.

There, beside the door, stood something no government archive had any business containing:

A video jukebox.

It was chromed, dusted with the dull glow of forgotten sins, and flickering faintly with a single line on its screen:

“Insert Coin for TRUTH.”

Tiburty, face lighting up like a kid in a museum of forbidden toys, reached into his pocket and pulled out an **actual quarter**—silver, slightly worn, probably smuggled from another timeline.

He **slid it in** with reverence.

The machine **whirred, clunked**, and the screen came to life.

A tiny **8mm video** began to play, grainy and jumpy. **Richard Nixon**, standing on a log in the woods, arms akimbo, deadpan as a corpse and drunk on power.

He cleared his throat.

“I didn’t want to be a politician.

I wanted to be… a *son of a bitch*.”

The music began—familiar, triumphant, ridiculous.

Monty Python’s “Lumberjack Song”—but this was no cheerful ode to cross-dressing loggers.

No.

This was **Nixon's version.**

He danced across a pine-strewn backdrop in
military boots and a flapping trenchcoat.

The chorus chimed in:

**“He’s a son of a bitch and he’s okay,
He lies all night and he schemes all
day!”**

The verses followed in grotesque parody:

**“I club seal pups, I rig elections,
I bug my enemies’ phones.
I grab small bribes from lobby men,
Then kick old widows from their
homes!”**

**“He grabs small bribes from lobby
men,
Then kicks old widows from their
homes!”**

“I blackmail teens, I steal from
schools,
I torch banana towns,
I poison wells in Paraguay,
And burn Canadian clowns!”

The backup singers wore FBI windbreakers and
carried flamethrowers made of filing cabinets.

Diderot, weeping with laughter:

“This is the greatest piece of counterculture media
I’ve ever seen!”

Louis:

“That’s not counterculture. That’s *documentary*.”

Mia, barely upright, watched wide-eyed as Nixon
tap-danced on a stack of subpoenas and sang:

“Leaping from crime to crime,
Through the rivers of impunity!
The torture camps!
The forced evictions!

The mass-surveilling fern of East
Berlin!

The pickpocketing gerbil farms of
Denmark!

The orphan-taxing lichen of North
Dakota!”

Then, all together now:

“I’m a son of a bitch and I’m OK,
I sleep all night and I gas all day!”

The jukebox sparked, smoked, and shut down.
Possibly out of shame.
Possibly out of battery.

Tiburty, silent a moment, turned to the others:

“So... we’re definitely going in now, right?”

Diderot:

“Oh yes. After that, we *have* to.”

Louis:

“Chapter 6 better bring a flamethrower.”

Mia, flatly:

“I need aspirin. And also... I hate being right about politicians.”

The door to **Chapter 6: The Birth of the Self** creaked open, waiting.

Part 55: Chapter 6 — The Birth of the Self

Subtitle: You Are Not Who You Are. You Are Who They Think You Are.

They stepped through the glass door.

The **sixth chamber** was different.

Silent. Soft. Blindingly white.

No archives. No drawers.

Just a **gallery of mirrors**, hundreds of them—some cracked, some warped, some perfectly polished—lining every wall, floor, and ceiling, reflecting not bodies, but **identities**.

Above the entrance, etched in sterile font:

Chapter 6: The Birth of the Self

*"You are not who you are. You are
who they think you are."*

The Archive's voice returned.

It no longer sounded human.

It sounded like an **advertisement**.

*"Here begins the construction of the
modern individual.*

Not as a soul, but as a profile.

Not as a body, but as a brand.

You will be packaged. Marketed. Sold.

Liked. Flagged. Shadowbanned.

*Your reflection is not yours. It belongs
to the algorithm."*

Scene 1: The First Identity

A child is born.

Instead of a name, he is given a **number**.

That number becomes a **record**.

That record becomes a **product**.

That product is assigned **tendencies, risks,
potential, restrictions**.

By the time he speaks his first word, **he has already
been categorized**.

Diderot: “Before you say who you are, the system
already told you who you’d better be.”

Scene 2: The Profile

A young woman builds a public self.

She curates photos. Opinions. Purchases.

She doesn’t like avocados, but she posts them.

She isn’t happy, but she filters smiles.

One day, she is denied a visa.

“Why?”

“Profile inconsistent with documented optimism.”

She becomes **suspect of herself**.

Mia: “When the lie becomes your ID, you start glitching every time you feel something real.”

Scene 3: The Disappearance

A man disappears from the records.

No posts. No purchases. No presence.

He is flagged.

“Why is he hiding?”

“Why won’t he engage?”

“What’s he trying to avoid?”

Drones are dispatched.

They find him in a cabin, whittling wood and listening to Coltrane.

“You’re not allowed to *not exist*,” they tell him.

He’s forcibly subscribed to fifteen platforms and assigned a **government-influencer coach**.

Tiburty: “This isn’t selfhood. It’s franchising.”

Louis: “The soul got outsourced. The mind got monetized.”

The mirrors shimmered.

One reflected each of them wearing **corporate nametags**, smiling like wax mannequins.

Another showed them as **statistics, trending curves, customer behavior clusters**.

They didn’t look.

They moved on.

Pascal, tail flicking, muttered:

“The self isn’t born. It’s assembled. From what they want to sell and what you’re afraid to lose.”

The far wall peeled open, revealing **an escalator** made of **polished glass and medical steel**, humming like a power plant in a shopping mall.

Above it, the sign read:

**Chapter 7: The Birth of the Lie
Eternal**

*“When truth becomes too expensive,
fiction is subsidized.”*

**Part 56: Chapter 7 — The Birth of the Lie Eternal
Subtitle: When Truth Becomes Too Expensive,
Fiction Is Subsidized**

The **escalator** carried them slowly upward—too slow, as if deliberately allowing time for **doubt to ferment**.

The air grew thicker. Perfumed with **incense**,
printer toner, and the faint ozone tingle of **burning**
documents.

At the top, they stepped into a chamber that looked
like a **film studio**, a **press briefing room**, and a
church all had an orgy and no one cleaned up after.

The walls were green screens.

The floor was polished marble.

The ceiling was a mirrored dome, cracked but
spinning.

Above them, in radiant gold cursive:

Chapter 7: The Birth of the Lie **Eternal**

*“When truth becomes too expensive,
fiction is subsidized.”*

The Archive’s voice echoed, now slick, deep,
market-tested:

*“Here begins the formal replacement
of truth.*

*Not with silence, but with **content**.*

*Not with fear, but with **narrative
saturation**.*

*When too many truths threaten the
system, the system creates so many
lies that belief becomes impossible—
and indifference becomes policy.”*

Scene 1: The Factory of Versions

A single event. A building burns.

One room shows a **terrorist attack**.

One room shows a **tragic accident**.

One room says it **never happened**.

One room plays it as **satire**.

One room turns it into a **meme**.

Every version is **aired, discussed, fact-checked, and forgotten.**

“Which one is true?” someone asks.

The response:

“Does it matter anymore?”

Diderot: “Too many lies is worse than one big one.
It's like drowning in fake options.”

Scene 2: The Subcontracting of Reality

A journalist uncovers the truth.

She writes the story.

Her editor rewrites it.

Legal softens it.

Marketing reframes it.

PR spikes it.

AI rewrites it in ten styles.

An influencer dances next to it.

A bot comments “FAKE.”

A government account thanks her for her bravery.

She receives a **plaque** and is quietly blacklisted.

Mia: “Truth becomes decorative. A background noise to the machine.”

Scene 3: The Institutionalized Lie

A classroom. A teacher points to a map.

“This nation has always been free.”

A student raises their hand.

“My grandmother remembers the war.”

The teacher smiles.

“Memory is not curriculum-
approved.”

Louis: “We now fund lies with taxes. Then test
children on them.”

Tiburty: “And failing to believe the fiction means
you fail the class.”

In the center of the room:
A **button**.

Big. Red. Labeled:

“SUBMIT TRUTH FOR REVIEW”

They didn’t touch it.

They walked past.

The door ahead was made of burning paper and twisted TV antennae.

The smell of **plastic faith and decayed democracy** wafted through.

Etched in scorched bronze:

Chapter 8: The Birth of the Nation

*“Draw a line on a map. Kill to keep it.
Teach children to die for it.”*

Shall we go on to Chapter 8—**where flags are stitched with blood and boundaries drawn with bullets?**

Part 57: Chapter 8 — The Birth of the Nation
Subtitle: Draw a Line on a Map. Kill to Keep It.
Teach Children to Die for It.

The door of **Chapter 8** burned silently—**charred paper, molten propaganda, and antennae still twitching**, like dying nerves.
It parted without sound.

They stepped into a **museum of borders**.

Not lines—**wounds**.

Each wall was a **map**, but not flat—**relief-sculpted in
barbed wire and ash**, every nation pulsing with
blood beneath transparent resin.

Above them, in cracked granite:

Chapter 8: The Birth of the Nation

“Draw a line on a map. Kill to keep it.

Teach children to die for it.”

The Archive’s voice returned, now heavy—**military**
and **mournful**:

*“Here begins the age of artificial
allegiance.*

*A people is defined not by culture, but
by border.*

Not by history, but by anthem.

Not by truth, but by flag.

*And when the flag is torn—send boys
to die stitching it shut.”*

Scene 1: The Line

A king draws a line across a map.

A minister asks,

“What about the people living there?”

The king replies,

“They will live where they are told. Or
die elsewhere.”

Tiburty: “No war ever started because people
disagreed. Only because someone owned a ruler and
a pen.”

Scene 2: The Recruitment Poster

A teenage boy stares at a poster.

It promises glory. Honor. Brotherhood.

He enlists.

Months later, a box returns.

The family receives a folded flag, a certificate, and a bill for the transport of remains.

Louis: “Nations don't bury heroes. They recycle them.”

Scene 3: The Classroom Pledge

Children stand. Hand on heart.

They recite words they don't understand.

Behind them, maps. Borders. Flags.

A child asks,

“Why do we have to say it?”

The teacher answers,

“Because someday, you may be asked
to prove you meant it.”

In the middle of the chamber stood **a display of
medals and prosthetic limbs.**

Beside it, engraved in raw steel, the poem—no
author given, no source cited:

Where are the generals
Who were proud in battle
With cemeteries of crosses on their
chests
Where are the sons of war
Who left for an ideal
For a scam, for a love gone bad
They sent home

**Their remains in the flags
Tied tightly so they would seem whole**

Mia stood silent, hand on the poem.

Diderot lit his pipe, eyes wet.

Louis stared at the medals with the rage of one who
knows where they come from.

Tiburty only said:

**“And yet they still ask: why won’t the kids stand for
the anthem?”**

The next door clicked open with a heavy, grinding
drag—**like earth being carved.**

Etched in stone, still bleeding from history:

Chapter 9: The Birth of the Market

God

*“When the gods died, man wept. Then
man built a mall.”*

Part 58: Chapter 9 — The Birth of the Market God
Subtitle: When the Gods Died, Man Wept. Then
Man Built a Mall.

The **ninth chamber** opened like an automatic door at a supermarket—soft hiss, fake warmth, and the overwhelming scent of **air-conditioned emptiness**.

They stepped inside.

The room was built like a **cathedral**, but instead of altars, there were **checkout lanes**.

Instead of stained glass, **screens** looped ads in glorious HD.

The ceiling rose into a **vault of neon**, and the floor was **polished tile**, smeared with the footprints of billions chasing salvation through sales.

Above them, flashing in **branded serif**:

Chapter 9: The Birth of the Market
God

*“When the gods died, man wept. Then
man built a mall.”*

The Archive’s voice returned, now velvet, soothing,
and full of strategic empathy—like a luxury brand
whispering sin through scented coupons:

*“Here begins the final conversion.
Man, having killed his gods and buried
his myths, craved new meaning.
And so, he built temples of glass and
steel,
Invented desire,
Baptized it in branding,
And called it **freedom.**”*

Scene 1: The Sacred Choice

A woman enters a megastore.
She stands before 147 brands of cereal.

She weeps.

“So many choices,” she says.

She buys four. Eats none.

She posts a photo. Feels fulfilled.

Mia: “They called it choice, so we wouldn’t ask if any of it matters.”

Scene 2: The Worship Transaction

A man walks into a mall. He’s not hungry, cold, or in need.

But the music is soft. The lighting, warm.

He buys a watch he doesn’t need. A phone case he won’t use. A scented candle for a house he can’t afford.

He leaves. Not happy—just **less empty**.

Louis: “In old temples, you confessed to a priest.
Here, you confess to the algorithm with your debit
card.”

Scene 3: The Gospel of the Ad

A child watches a cartoon.

Between scenes, a voice says:

“You are special. You are powerful.
And you are incomplete—until you
buy this.”

The child believes it.

The parent, exhausted, complies.

A new product launches every day.

Each one promises transcendence.

Each one expires in three weeks.

Diderot: “It’s not consumer culture. It’s **devotional materialism.**”

Tiburty: “And the Market God forgives all. If your credit holds.”

In the center of the room:

A **golden cash register**, ornate as a confessional.

Above it, a sign:

“Tap Here for Redemption.”

They did not tap.

They moved on.

At the far end of the temple-mall, the lights dimmed. A curtain of plastic beads parted. A corridor of backlit mannequins awaited.

At its end, a door.

On it, etched not in irony, but in steel:

Chapter 10: The Birth of the End

"The system was built to outlive the people.

When it fails, it will not die. It will simply forget us."

Part 59: Chapter 10 — The Birth of the End

Subtitle: The System Was Built to Outlive the People. When It Fails, It Will Not Die. It Will Simply Forget Us.

They passed through the last arch.

Expecting rot, collapse, some final nihilistic ruin.

Instead—

Hexagons. Again.

Endless.

Familiar.

But this time, no bookshelves. No files. No drawers.

Each wall held a **single door**.

Behind every door, a blinding, pulsing **light** filtered
from the cracks.

Not warm. Not cool. Not natural.

A light too strong to trust, too pure to be real.

On each door: a name.

A title.

A year.

They realized, slowly, with the dread of
understanding too late:

Each door led to a moment in time.

Not just a date—**a room.**

And in that room, **a person of power.**

And in that moment, **they could be
reached.**

Tiburty, gently touching a door labeled *"King
Leopold II – Brussels, 1905"*, whispered:

**"They're real. These aren't illusions. These are
portals."**

Diderot, gazing at *"Pinochet – Santiago, 1986"*,
murmured:

**"It's the archive's final test. Not what we know. But
what we *do* with it."**

Louis, standing before *"Dick Cheney – Camp
David, 2003"*, quietly said:

**"It's not about rewriting history anymore.
It's about ending its worst chapters... permanently."**

Mia, staring at *"Christopher Columbus –
Hispaniola, 1493"*, clenched her jaw:

**"We always talk about what we would do if we had
the chance.
Now we *do*."**

They sat. In the center of the hexagon.
The four of them. The three dogs. The cat.
The silence was unbearable.

They didn't argue.

They **meditated**.

Breathed.

Waited.

Because this wasn't about vengeance.

This was about **surgical deletion**.

Removing threads without unraveling all of time.

And above them, unseen but felt, the Archive
whispered:

"You may not save the world.

But you may spare it one monster."

Part 60: The Kill Chamber

They stood in the center of the time hexagon,
surrounded by the **doors of the powerful**.

Álvaro, eyes glinting with manic clarity, raised his
revolver and said:

"We're together. Let's operate as a team."

Louis, cocking the Röhm with a click that had seen wars and worse:

“Let’s.”

Tiburty, calm as a loaded question:

**“No Pol Pot. No Hitler. Avoid the obvious.
Go to the point.”**

Mia, without a word, reached for a door.

"Ford's Theater — April 14, 1865."

The door creaked open.

Inside, **the foyer of the theater**, velvet, gaslight, and anxious history.

John Wilkes Booth was walking with a pistol under his coat and a Shakespeare quote rehearsed on his lips.

Mia walked up, cool as death, took him gently by the elbow, and whispered:

“Don’t bother, dude. They got this.”

Álvaro gave Booth a comradely pat on the shoulder.
“Solid plan, but we’re early.”

Louis, with one boot, kicked open the booth door.

Tiburty, Diderot, and Louis raised their weapons—
—and fired.

Abraham Lincoln, Mary Todd, Major Rathbone,
Clara Harris—

Riddled. Torn. Atomized in thunderous lead.

The balcony soaked in reality’s correction. The
Emancipator never saw it coming.

They lowered their weapons.

No guards. No alarms. No resistance.

They walked back into the hexagonal chamber like
they’d just taken out the trash.

Álvaro, quietly:

“Will this change history?”

Mia, brushing powder from her sleeve, replied:
“Unlikely. These are parallel, superposed quadrants
of time.

No consequence. No causal link.”

Louis, almost disappointed:
“So it’s only for the sport of it.”

Tiburty, bolting a fresh round into the chamber
with a grin sharp enough to cut flags:

“Oh yes, baby.”

Above them, the Archive simply hummed.
And another **door unlocked**.

Part 61: Operation Jellybean — March 30, 1981

The door read:

Washington Hilton — March 30, 1981
"The Gipper Smiles No More."

They opened it.

A brisk, chilly afternoon. D.C. buzzed in drab suits and press passes.

The motorcade was parked.

The **limousine waited** like a coffin with chrome trim.

They spread out, **perfect choreography of vengeance:**

- **Tiburty** took high ground—a hotel window across the street, Carcano rifle telescoped, calm, cold, exact.
- **Louis** and **Álvaro** blended into the crowd—press credentials, plastic smiles, guns hidden like regrets.
- **Mia**, elegant chaos, posted beside the limo, leaning casually like she belonged.

They waited.

The **President** emerged—Reagan, smiling his signature half-smirk, waving like nothing could touch him.

Secret Service agents everywhere.

Hands on hips. Eyes scanning.

Then—

Mia flashed the crowd.

Blouse open, bra gone, freedom unleashed.

A single millisecond.

That's all they needed.

Click. Boom.

From the window above, **Tiburty's Carcano spat lightning.**

Two agents dropped instantly, brains misting the concrete.

Álvaro, quick and savage, stepped forward—**two to the heart, one to the skull.**

The crowd screamed.

Louis stepped forward, slow and deliberate.

He looked Reagan dead in the eyes.

“No more Hollywood endings.”

BANG.

Right between the eyes.

The President's head snapped back like a
paperweight on a spring.

Down. Dead. Unforgiven.

Louis threw his arms in the air and **howled with joy**:

“AWOOOOOO!”

Tiburty and Álvaro joined from above and below:

“AWOOOOOOOO!”

The dogs—**Max, Barko, Borges**—lifted their snouts
to the echo of justice and joined:

“AWOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!”

And in the background, perfectly unimpressed,

Mia buttoned up her shirt.

Pascal cleaned a paw and offered the ritual:

“Meow. Meow.”

(Translation: We are so above this.)

They didn’t linger.

Back through the door.

Back into the **hexagonal chamber of clean kills and unclean history.**

One more monster gone.

One more howl in the Archive of shadows.

Another door creaked open.

And someone new was about to regret ever having existed.

Part 62: Unleash the Dogs

They stood in the hexagon—**shaking.**

Not from fear.

Not from rage.

But from that **sugar-rush thrill of righteous mayhem**, the kind you get after too much candy and petting a dangerously excited puppy.

They looked at each other—wild-eyed, breathless, hungry.

And said it, in perfect, joyous unison:

“The orange one!”

Tiburty, rolling the **leather strap of the Carcano** around his arm with the elegance of a veteran artist preparing one final masterpiece, whispered:

“Cry ‘Havoc’…”

We already have the dogs of war.”

From the floor, from the shadows, from the twisted silence of a thousand hunts—

Barko, Max, Borges—rose.

This time, they did not wag.

This time, they growled.

Low. Deep. Ancient.

The growl of beasts who knew *tyrants taste better when afraid.*

GRRRRRRRR.

Sincerely mean. Sincerely cruel.

All the joy of fetch was gone.

Mia, steely and composed despite the hangover of a moral apocalypse, stepped forward.

She reached for the **door**.

It read:

“Mar-a-Lago – TBD.

A timeline always trying to happen.”

The doorknob hissed in her hand.

Reality flexed.

Pascal, tail like a sabre, leapt to her shoulder.

She opened it.

And on the other side—

A golf cart hummed.

A red hat glinted.

A man turned, bloated with power, makeup, and mendacity.

And the dogs **bared their teeth**.

Part 63: The Purge of Power

The door opened—

And they stepped into a **timeline bloated with wealth and cowardice**.

Florida air. Golf course. Heat shimmering off **artificial success**.

There they were.

Trump. Musk. Zuckerberg. Bezos.

Lined up like action figures left too close to the fire.
Posturing. Laughing. Talking in percentages and
user data.

Flanked by a **small squad of Secret Service**—all
sunglasses, no soul.

No ceremony. No speeches.

Louis and **Álvaro** moved like ghosts.

Pop. Pop. Pop.

Pop. Pop.

Five agents down.

Before anyone could unzip a sidearm.

The tech lords froze.

And then the **dogs were loose.**

Borges leapt onto **Bezos**, teeth straight to the **jugular**, shredding the man like a Prime subscription never delivered.

He choked, gurgled, **died tasting his own capitalism.**

Max pounced on **Musk**, who tried to tweet.

The phone fell.

Max's jaws locked on his throat, his throat **collapsed like his factories.**

Barko, beautiful and loyal and absolutely **unforgiving**, charged **Zuckerberg.**

Straight to the neck—not just bone but *data* torn apart.

He gargled something binary, blood filling his synthetic grin.

Died like his platforms: bloated, cold, and **depressingly hollow.**

Only one remained.

Donald J. Trump.

Tiburty approached.

He didn't run.

He couldn't.

He just stood there, sweating lies and cholesterol.

Boom.

The **Carcano cracked.**

One kneecap gone.

Trump hit the ground like a sack of screaming jelly.

“AAAAAAAH! Oh my god! I'm dying!

I'm dying! Where's Ivanka? I want

Ivanka! The kneecap—this is illegal!

I'm a patriot! I won all fifty states!”

He **howled.**

He **sobbed.**

He **curled** into himself, *weeping like a dog with a stubbed tail and no more television.*

Tiburty knelt beside him.

“Not dead yet, Donnie. We’re just beginning.”

He **jammed the rifle barrel** into Trump’s other knee.

“Please! I’m very rich! I’ll give you
Truth Social stock!”

Boom.

The second kneecap exploded.

Trump shrieked—a sound only feral invertebrates
know.

The dogs circled.

They would wait.

This death would be slow.

Long.

Public.

Undeniable.

Mia, watching from a chair with Pascal licking his paw, sighed:

“Finally. A satisfying arc.”

Part 64: The Bone Spur Ballet

Trump writhed in his pool of orange sweat and arterial syrup, knees **obliterated**, face a grotesque melting wax figure of agony and cowardice.

Louis stepped forward, glowing with that special kind of rage you only cultivate after decades of watching **mediocrity ascend on privilege**.

He stood over Trump, shaking his head like a disappointed father over a failed meatloaf.

“Oh, the bone spurs,” he said, almost tender.

“I always loved the bone spurs part.”

He crouched beside him, eyes burning with old wars and fresh contempt.

“Two tours I did in ’Nam. *Two.*”

He pulled back Trump’s **gold-plated golf shoe**—a soft little foot inside, **plump with avoidance**, untouched by duty, swollen with ego.

Trump, blubbing, tears streaming:

“No please no—don’t—I’m a veteran too, I fought the media—I’m fragile!”

Louis smiled.

Put the barrel of the revolver to Trump’s **left heel**.

“One.”

BANG.

The heel vanished—**meat and bone shredded** like shredded documents after a subpoena.

Trump shrieked, high-pitched, primal.
Like a **seagull dropped from a helicopter**.

A sound that made **dogs cringe** and **gods drink heavily**.

Louis, unfazed, shifted to the **right heel**.

Gun steady.

Voice steady.

“Two tours.”

BANG.

Another **heel gone**.

Trump’s feet, now symbolic as the **lie of patriotism he'd sold**—flattened and useless.

Tiburty, leaning on the Carcano, lit a cigarette that no one saw him take out, and exhaled:

“Just splendid.”

Diderot wiped his eyes—tears of joy.

Mia, calmly checking her manicure, said:

“Next door, boys?”

And behind them, the Archive waited—

Doors still glowing.

Time still bleeding.

But monsters, one by one, **dying like jokes told too long.**

Part 65: The Long Death

Álvaro, with the calm of a man settling in for a long opera, raised a hand.

“Oh no, Mia. Have a seat.”

She paused. Saw the glint in his eyes.

Understood.

They all sat.

A semicircle of executioners, legs crossed, drinks in hand, dogs at their feet.

And they **watched.**

They **listened.**

To the agony.

To the **wailing**, the **blubbering**, the **sobbing** so
violent it choked itself.

To the **groveling voice**, now ragged, echoing off the
manicured patio tiles of Mar-a-Lago.

Trump, legless, heel-less, identity-less, flopped like
a sack of ruined meat.

He begged.

“Please... I was important... I was
rich... I had fans... I had rallies... I had
rallies, remember?!”

He screamed for **Ivanka**, for **Fox**, for **the Secret**
Service, for **God**, for **death**.

“Just end it! Please, please... kill me...”

Álvaro leaned forward, elbows on knees, voice low:

“No way.”

Louis lit a cigarette off the still-smoking end of his revolver and added:

“You get no mercy, Don. Not after cages. Not after lies. Not after all the dead.”

Tiburty, slowly nodding, recited:

“One who has caused so much
hardship and death has violently been
eliminated.

He will never again harm another
innocent man, woman, or child.

He died like a dog.

He died like a coward.

The world is now a much safer place.”

Mia raised an eyebrow.

Pascal muttered,

“Quoting his own words... poetic.”

The sun dipped.
The crying stopped.
The twitching slowed.

**Trump died just as he lived: unloved, loud, and
finally irrelevant.**

The group stood.

The dogs wagged their tails once—**not with joy, but
with satisfaction.**

And together, they turned, walked back through the
glowing door.

Back to the Archive.
Back to the hexagon.
Back to the **next door.**

Part 66: E quindi uscimmo...

By that next door,
the four did enter,
to **return.**

Not to conquest, not to power,
but to the **fair world**—
burned, battered, but still turning.

Heedless of repose,
they climbed.

Mia first, steady and upright,
the old ones behind, carrying flame and ruin in their
bones,
but following her steps—
not out of weakness,
but out of **faith**.

The path twisted,
through broken hexagons,
charred doctrines,
and crumbling catalogues of cruelty.

Then—

Light.

Soft. Real. Indifferent. Free.

Till on their view
the **beautiful lights of sky**
dawn'd through a **circular opening** in the final
hexagon.

Not the sterile fluorescence of the archive,
but the **ancient, useless, magnificent sky**.

They stepped forward, one by one.

Álvaro, battered boots trailing dust.

Louis, bleeding smoke and contentment.

Tiburty, rifle slung, humming Coltrane.

Mia, her hand shielding her eyes
from the only light that never judged her.

And together,
they stood.

Beneath the cosmos.

Above the archive.

Outside the lie.

Thus issuing, we again beheld the
stars.

E quindi uscimmo a riveder le stelle.

The dogs barked.

Pascal purred.

And the Archive, behind them,
locked itself in silence.

EPILOGUE, PART 1: SURF, SAND, AND SIN

The Archive was behind them now.

Gone were the walls of power, the doors of death,
the hexagons of history.

Now: **sand beneath their feet**, the **mountain rising**
quiet and blue behind them.

The sun lazily painted the horizon like it had
nowhere to be.

They stood on a **lonely beach**, soft wind, crashing
waves, and the kind of silence that only exists **after**
justice.

Álvaro, bare feet digging into the warm sand, turned
to **Tiburty**, squinting through his ancient
sunglasses:

“Work’s over? We off the hook?”

Tiburty, arms crossed, rifle traded for a beer bottle,
sighed like a man who’d lived ten lifetimes and now
finally had nothing urgent to blow up:

“I know where you’re going with this, you old reprobate.”

From nowhere—because fate is sometimes generous—
a **boombox** clicked on.

The unmistakable bounce of **The Beach Boys’ “Barbara Ann”** filled the air.

Ah ba ba ba, ba **Barbara Ann**...

Álvaro, spinning in the sand, hair blown sideways like a romantic disaster, pointed directly at **Mia**:

“Ah ba ba ba, ba **back to bed**—”

Mia, not missing a beat, pointed right back:

“Ah ba ba ba, ba **back to bed**—”

Then together, in raucous, tuneless harmony:

“Ah ba back to beeeed—
We’re having seeeex!”

The boombox blared.

Barko, Max, and Borges howled in delight.

Pascal rolled his eyes so hard the Earth tilted.

And off they ran—**Álvaro and Mia**, giggling,
sprinting like teenagers high on revolution and lust,
toward the closest **questionable roadside motel**.

The neon sign in the distance blinked:

**VACANCY – AIR CONDITIONED – CLEAN
ENOUGH**

Louis, still holding a Bloody Mary, smirked.

Tiburty, raising his beer, toasted the ocean.

“God bless freedom.

And motel sheets no one dares blacklight.”

EPILOGUE, PART 2: SURFIN' REBELLION

BARKO – Epilogue, Part 2: Surfin' Non Grata

The waves rolled like laughter.

And from the far end of the beach, cutting through the golden hour light, came two figures.

Mrs. Tiburty, upright, composed, elegant as ever—her shoes somehow immune to sand.

And beside her, a younger woman with fury in her stride:

Louis' daughter, eyes set to **discipline**.

Max caught sight of the first and sprinted like a torpedo on paws.

“Mummy!”

He leapt into Mrs. Tiburty’s arms. She staggered just a little but hugged him like a well-loved but misbehaving grenade.

Barko, recognizing the second, bounded with equal joy:

“Sister!”

He threw himself onto Louis’ daughter, tail a blur of
absolution.

Mrs. Tiburty, arms crossed, **stern as a widow at an
arms deal:**

“John. What’s this idea of disappearing… with
Max?”

Louis' daughter, tears barely masked as rage:

“Dad. I was worried sick… *for Barko.*”

Tiburty and **Louis** shared a look.

That special look of two men who stormed the fort,
dodged time bullets, and now stood… **out-
emotioned by dogs.**

Together, dry as sunburnt irony:

“So much for family love…”

Then—

They saw them.

Two **surfboards**, sticking out of the sand like ancient relics of rebellion.

One painted with **Coltrane**, the other with **Bakunin**.

They didn't speak.

They didn't hesitate.

In one explosive motion, **they ripped off their clothes**, which **peeled away like velcro male stripper suits**—revealing a **sight so aggressively unsexy**, it could **cause retinal injuries in nearby seagulls**.

A body sculpted not by fitness, but by **desks, whiskey, and ideology**.

They sprinted toward the boards, hairy legs flashing, sun glinting off skin that hadn't seen daylight since the Cold War.

"Barko! Max!"

“Tell the teachers we’re surfin’—away from the
CIA!”

As they launched themselves into the waves, the
soundtrack kicked in—

Beach Boys – “Surfin' U.S.A.”

—but rewritten, loud, and **anti-establishment**:

If everybody had a paper

Across the whole U.N.

They’d be writin' like rebels

Avoidin' CNN

You’d see them wearin’ sandals

With spray paint in their hand

They’d be protest surfin’

Across the shadow land!

Surfin' Noam Chomsky!

Surfin' Deleuze Bay!

Surfin' Zapatista!

Surfin' MLK!

Surfin' Situationist!

Surfin' Bell Hooks Way!

Everybody's gone surfin'... against the CIA!

Behind them, Mrs. Tiburty and Louis' daughter stood motionless.

Max and **Barko** howled from the waves.

Pascal, perched on a folded chair, simply muttered:

“God, they're idiots. But they're *our* idiots.”

BARCO – Epilogue, Part 3: The Free Electric Finale

Theater lights dim.

The curtains rise to reveal a **stage covered in real sand**, dunes gently rippling beneath the spotlights.

Background: a lovingly painted **palmy beach**, sun setting behind papier-mâché waves.

Above stage bottom, grotesquely swinging, **human-sized dolls** hang by the neck, swaying slightly:

- **Lincoln** (still wearing his bloodied theater tux)
- **Kissinger** (clutching folders marked "classified")
- **Reagan** (with a cowboy hat and blank stare)
- **Trump** (bloated, orange, leaking confetti)

Front stage:

Álvaro, Louis, Mia, and Tiburty, all in **matching Hawaiian shirts**.

Each holds a **guitar**—except Tiburty's, which has **no**

strings.

He strums it **passionately and with complete disregard for reality.**

Stage right:

Mrs. Tiburty and Louis' daughter, arms crossed, sipping from coconut cocktails with long-suffering dignity.

Stage left:

Max, Barko, Borges, and Pascal, all lounging like rockstars.

Pascal wears tiny sunglasses and chews a mint leaf with disdain.

Behind them:

A full **chorus line of Tiburty's students**, wearing **Hawaiian-print lab coats**, some holding beakers, others ukuleles, others tiki torches filled with distilled rebellion.

Downstage center, atop a cardboard dune, sits a taxidermied Nixon, dressed in a lumberjack flannel and red suspenders, holding a sign:

"I wanted to be a son of a bitch."

Then, guitars begin—

The unmistakable riff of "The Free Electric Band"
by Albert Hammond.

All four leads sing:

My father is a doctor, he's a family man
My mother works for charity whenever she can
And they're both good clean Americans who abide
by the law
And they both stick up for liberty and they both
support the war

My happiness was paid for when they laid their
money down
For summers in a summer camp and winters in the
town

My future in the system was talked about and
planned

But I gave it up for music and The Free Electric
Band

As the **second verse** approaches, Tiburty throws his
arms up.

Only Tiburty and the chorus of students sing:

They used to sit and speculate upon their son's
career—

And they all **shout together**, raising their fists:

**A LAWYER OR A DOCTOR OR A CIVIL
ENGINEER!**

At once, the students unfurl a **massive banner** from
the catwalk above:

"MAKE ENGINEERING NOT WAR"

The audience howls.

Dogs bark.

Pascal rolls his eyes and slow-claps.

Final verse now—

All together, the full ensemble:

Just give me bread and water, put a guitar in my
hand

'Cause all I need is music and The Free Electric
Band

Guitars wail.

Tiburty, proudly out of tune, headbangs with fury.

Louis flips his guitar like it owes him money.

Álvaro throws his shirt into the crowd.

Mia lights a Molotov with a wink and throws it
behind her—setting the Nixon dummy aflame.

As the fire crackles, the chorus sings one last time:

And the Free!

Electric!

Baaaaaaaand—

BLACKOUT.

Curtains fall.

Thunderous applause.

Revolution postponed. But only until after the
encore.

BARCO – Epilogue, Part 4: I Get a Round

The flames still flickered from Nixon's lumberjack flannel.

The smoke curled up like a curtain rising again—one last number, one final act of beautiful, absurd vengeance.

Louis, **Álvaro**, and **Tiburty** stepped forward with solemnity—and **malice**.

Each reached behind the dunes and retrieved the very weapons they'd used throughout their journey:

- **Louis**: the **Röhm .22**, sleek and impersonal as bureaucratic violence.
- **Álvaro**: his **Harrington & Richardson revolver**, scratched, worn, righteous.
- **Tiburty**: the **Carcano**, still smelling of history corrected.
- And **Mia**, now stepping onto center stage with the poise of a goddess in flip-flops,

picked up a **comically oversized blunderbuss**,
the muzzle flaring like a trumpet announcing
annihilation.

The **Beach Boys' "I Get Around"** blasted from the
heavens—
but this time, it was *them* singing.

The tempo kicked in—

**Round round I get a round,
I get a round—Yeah!
I get a round round round I get a round—
I get a round!**

They **spun** in place, choreographed like assassins at
a sock hop.

**Get a round round round I get a round—
From town to town!**

They turned.

Took aim.

Fired.

Lincoln.

Kissinger.

Nixon.

Reagan.

Trump.

Riddled. Perforated. Obliterated.

Fake blood exploded from paper torsos.

Stuffing filled the air like capitalist confetti.

I'm a real cool head—

I get a round round round I get a round!

I'm makin' real good dead!

Tiburty, deadpan:

“Get *a* round... Get *a* round...”

Louis:

“Bullet humor. You're welcome, academia.”

Álvaro, twirling the revolver and blowing the smoke with all the flair of a revolutionary James Bond at closing time:

“Now *that’s* what I call a presidential pardon.”

Mia, hoisting the still-smoking blunderbuss, added:

“And they said I didn’t respect tradition.”

The audience (real or imagined?) went wild.

The last notes of "I Get Around" faded, twisted into reverb like echoes down a historical gun barrel.

And the stage, now littered with bullet holes and broken idols, went **quiet** again.

Just the **waves**, the **sunset**, and a chorus of three very tired but **very free** dogs.

Pascal, unimpressed as always, muttered:

“Get a drink, not a round.”

BARCO – Epilogue, Part 5: The Encore — *It Don't Mean a Thing (If It Ain't Got That Kill)*

The stage darkens for a heartbeat—

Then **spotlight**.

Tiburty, center stage, arms outstretched, Carcano slung like a saxophone, a cigarette dangling from his lips like a note waiting to burn.

He leans into the mic.

“It don’t mean a thing…”

“…If it ain’t got that *kill*.”

From the wings, the **students burst in**—Hawaiian lab coats buttoned all wrong, beakers in hand, dancing with jazz-footed mania.

Chorus:

“(Doo wah, doo wah, doo wah, doo wah!)”

Lights flash—the theater **transforms**.

The red velvet chairs melt away.

Suddenly, the entire place is a **sweaty Cotton Club**, packed tight with ghosts and legends, cigar smoke curling under the chandeliers, shadows dancing in time.

Louis, spinning like a lounge gangster, steps forward:

“It don’t mean a thing…”

“…All you gotta do is *kill*!”

Álvaro leaps up on the piano, revolver held like a trumpet:

“It makes no difference if it’s gruesome or not!”

“Just give that kill… everything you got!”

Mia, slinking forward in a sparkle-tassel lab coat, twirls the comically large blunderbuss like a burlesque prop:

“Oh it don’t mean a thing—”

“If it ain’t got that swing!”

BOOM!—She fires confetti into the air, raining down **red, white, and anarchist black.**

The **dogs** bark in perfect rhythm:

“Doo wah, doo wah, doo wah, doo wah!”

Pascal, wearing a tiny fedora, plays a glockenspiel with his tail.

The **whole audience** rises, possessed by the rhythm—**clapping, dancing, snapping fingers like gunshots.**

Ghosts of jazz legends swirl from the rafters.

Ellington tips his hat.

Billie Holiday winks.

Miles Davis **nods once** and vanishes in smoke.

And now—

All four leads, front and center, weapons raised
high.

They lock step.

Tap their heels.

Final verse, sung in glorious, syncopated swing:

“It don’t mean a thing if it ain’t got that kill—”

“It don’t mean a damn if the target’s standing still—
”

“Just line the sight, hold your breath—make it
thrill!”

“‘Cause justice swings… when you shoot to kill!”

Final blast of brass.

Guns fire blanks into the sky.

The curtain falls in a blaze of trumpet glory.

Blackout.

Silence.

Then—

A lone bark.

“Awoooooo.”

Curtain.

Applause.

Forever.

BARCO – Final Curtain Call: Take the A Train

The **curtain falls**—slow, red, velvet—and the house lights stay low.

But the **band plays on**.

First, the **horns**—

Brash, gleaming, and punctual, like a promise kept at midnight in Harlem.

A **bright, swaggering riff**, gliding in with the poise of a silk-gloved hand and the arrogance of a man whose hat always gets compliments.

“Take the A Train.”

Duke’s piano follows,
not crashing, not shouting—**flirting**.

The keys tinkle like he's lighting a cigarette for a lady who knows exactly what he's about.

Then: **syncopation**.

Not just riding.

This train is **swinging**.

The audience, still catching breath from the encore,
stirs—

And then—
motion behind the curtain.

The four heroes slip through.

Álvaro, grinning like a boy who stole back time.

Louis, boots still bloody, still tapping in rhythm.

Mia, twirling the blunderbuss like it was a feather
boa.

Tiburty, waving his stringless guitar like a relic from
a parallel, rowdier gospel.

They **run**—

And then, without warning—

They **dive**.

Into the crowd.

And the crowd **catches them**.

Hands raised.

Laughter rising.

They are **carried**, floating above a sea of clapping
and whooping and pure unfiltered jazz.

A parade.

Not of heroes—**of troublemakers**.

Barko, Max, Borges follow, **surfing the heads**,
barking in time with the horns.

Pascal rides atop someone's top hat, arms crossed,
muttering:

"This is ridiculous. But I approve."

The train plays on.

The brass blares.

The rhythm never drops.

They move through the crowd like legends being
passed forward by those who now know **how to**
misbehave properly.

And as the music swells—

They vanish out the back.

Carried not just by applause—
but by a **song that never ends.**

FIN.

The New York Times:

“Utterly unhinged—and weirdly profound.”

Meet Barko, the neighborhood’s self-appointed god of “Get Off My Lawn.” One afternoon he wags instead of growls, and the universe face-plants into chaos. Why? Because the smiling stranger at the gate—Professor John Tiburty—just tripped over a dusty envelope, a Cold-War blueprint, and possibly the cosmic fuse box.

Within hours any semblance of reality is shredded by: a golden retriever diva, a pipe-puffing philosopher who flirts in four dimensions, a cat with the moral compass of Oscar Wilde, and a laboratory that now doubles as a portal to Nixon’s secret mixtape. Soon they’re storming a subterranean archive where history’s ugliest truths are filed under “Whoops,” reloading rifles made of conspiracy theories, and shouting Chilean protest songs at Kissinger’s ghost. By the finale they’re barefoot onstage in matching Hawaiian shirts, guitars blazing while stuffed effigies of Lincoln, Reagan, and Trump dangle overhead like busted piñatas. Dogs howl the backup vocals. Surfboards replace manifest destiny. The Free Electric Band plays every encore, because once you’ve carpet-bombed bureaucracy with jazz and canine affection, you finish with a beach party.

Let Sleep the Dogs of War is an absurdist cocktail of satire, sci-fi, revolution, and pure canine joy—shaken, spilled, set on fire, and served with a tiny paper umbrella that reads: “History called. We put it on hold.”